

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA**

P.O. BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

**DAWN N.S. CHANG**  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT

**RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE**  
FIRST DEPUTY

**CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES  
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION  
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES  
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MANAGEMENT  
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS  
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ENFORCEMENT  
ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

**Testimony of  
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE  
Acting Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committees on  
WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS  
and  
HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS**

**Tuesday, February 10, 2026  
1:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 224**

**In consideration of  
SENATE BILL 2996  
RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Senate Bill 2996 proposes to prohibit the capture and sale of aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes, regardless of the method of collection. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) appreciates the intent of this bill and offers the following comments.**

Pursuant to Hawaii Revised Statutes Chapters 187A and 189, the Department has managed the Hawai'i aquarium fishery for sustainable commercial use based on science and monitoring, gear restrictions, and in West Hawai'i, Fish Replenishment Areas (FRAs), which have contributed to increased populations of the two most heavily collected aquarium fish species. For example, in West Hawai'i, populations of yellow tang and goldring surgeonfish (kole), which together accounted for 91% of the total FY2017 aquarium catch, increased significantly within FRAs between 1999/2000 (when FRAs were first implemented) and 2021/2022.

In 2024, the Department's Division of Aquatic Resources conducted an independent review and analysis of available data for West Hawai'i and concluded that existing and proposed aquarium fish management measures provide significant safeguards against threats to populations of target species as well as threats to the ecosystem.

Since the 2017 Hawai'i Supreme Court ruling that aquarium fish permits are subject to the environmental review requirements of the Hawaii Environmental Policy Act (HEPA), aquarium collectors from Oahu and West Hawai'i have been required to prepare Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements to analyze the impacts of aquarium collecting. This HEPA compliance requirement greatly reduces the number of aquarium collectors eligible to participate in the fishery. To date, only seven collectors in West Hawai'i have completed the HEPA review process and are eligible to obtain aquarium fish permits.

The Department is currently developing administrative rules to regulate the commercial aquarium fishery through a combination of statewide and regional regulations. These rules are designed to ensure that any authorized aquarium collection activity will be strictly regulated and monitored for compliance and sustainability. The proposed regulations include a mandatory commercial aquarium fishing permit, a limited "whitelist" of species that may be harvested, total annual catch limits for each species, area restrictions, and reporting requirements.

The Department is proceeding under the existing legal and administrative framework to determine whether commercial aquarium collection is appropriate or inappropriate in Hawai'i. The Department recognizes, however, that there may be other reasons to prohibit commercial aquarium collection based on cultural or social values, which the Legislature must consider. Should a statutory ban be enacted, the Department will implement that direction.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB2996 WITH  
AMENDMENT**

RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Senate Committees on Water, Land, Culture, and the Arts  
and Hawaiian Affairs  
Hawai'i State Capitol

February 10, 2026

1:00 P.M.

Room 224

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Dear Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and Members of the  
Committees on Water, Land, Culture, and the Arts, and Hawaiian Affairs:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of SB2996 with a proposed amendment. SB2966 would ban commercial aquarium collection statewide, and is substantially similar to a bill included in OHA's 2026 Legislative Package ([SB2535/HB2101](#)).

This measure is necessary to balance the use of our public trust marine resources and to protect the communities most directly affected by commercial aquarium collection. These communities bear the burden of commercial collection practices that are geographically and spatially concentrated, reduce reef resilience by removing herbivorous fish from the environment, and disturb the exercise of subsistence fishing and other traditional practices. As a modest amendment consistent with the overall purpose and intent of this bill, OHA respectfully suggests amending the bill to delete Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) § 188-31 in its entirety. Deleting this section will eliminate a provision that has caused regulatory confusion at the agency level, as discussed below.

The Current Law Allowing Commercial Aquarium Collection is a Relic of the Past

Established pursuant to the terms of Section 5 of the Admissions Act and the Hawai'i State Constitution, Article XII, sections 4, 5, and 6, OHA serves as a semiautonomous agency and trust vehicle for the betterment of the conditions of Native Hawaiians. OHA's constitutional duties include administering its pro rata share of public trust revenues for the benefit of its Native Hawaiian beneficiaries, and formulating policy related to Native Hawaiians. HRS Chapter 10 further expands upon OHA role and duties in protecting and promoting Native Hawaiian rights across state agencies that have practices and policies that impair the exercise of such rights or affect OHA's mission to improve Native Hawaiian social and economic conditions. See HRS § 10-3.

The proposed ban set forth in SB2996 is consistent with OHA's existing duties to advance Native Hawaiian traditional and customary rights under Article XII, section 7 of the Hawai'i State Constitution and longstanding OHA policy to protect natural resources that are important to the culture and lifestyle of Native Hawaiians. The current law allowing commercial aquarium collection, HRS § 181-33, is an unfortunate relic of the territorial period when reef fish were erroneously considered inedible and without any other recognized value. In reality, herbivorous reef fish most heavily targeted for commercial collection such as lau'īpala (yellow tang) have been valued, managed, and revered by Native Hawaiians as a food source and for use in healing rituals and other traditional practices for generations.

This antiquated law no longer reflects contemporary values let alone legal duties related to protection of our 'āina, kai and Native Hawaiian practices that depend upon those resources. **To ensure consistency and to provide certainty with respect to the legislature's intent in passing this measure, OHA respectfully suggests that the Committees amend SB2996 to delete HRS 181-33 in its entirety.** An amendment to the bill deleting this section would ensure that this provision does not continue to drive decision making at the agency level.

#### Aquarium Collection Competes With Other Primary Economic

The state's commercial aquarium trade in native reef species has raised concerns among and inspired committed grassroots advocacy to protect reef ecosystems and the communities that depend on them for decades. In 2012, a coalition of Native Hawaiian lawai'a (fishers) from West Hawai'i, in partnership with other concerned ocean users, sued to enjoin commercial aquarium collection in state waters because the state had never conducted an environmental review of the impacts of the trade. In 2017 the Supreme Court agreed that in the absence of environmental review under the Hawai'i Environmental Policy Act (HEPA), continued aquarium collection was illegal. Aquarium collection stopped in the West Hawai'i Regional Fishery Management Area (WHRFMA) in 2017,<sup>1</sup> and statewide in 2021, after a second lawsuit ended a loophole for collection outside of West Hawai'i under commercial marine licenses. Therefore, there has not been any legal aquarium collection in the state for over five years.

In early October 2025, the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) proposed rules to reopen commercial aquarium collection in the WHRFMA following industry participants' completion of a Revised Final Environmental Impact Statement (RFEIS) in 2023.<sup>2</sup> The WHRFMA is significant because as of 2017, prior to closure of

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<sup>1</sup> WHRFMA extends along the west coast of Hawai'i Island, from Ka Lae, Ka'u (South Point) to Upolu Point, North Kohala, excluding Kawaihae commercial harbor. See HRS § 188F-2.

<sup>2</sup> Three Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) members voted to approve the 2023 FEIS and three voted to reject it. Therefore, the RFEIS was deemed approved by operation of law due since no action was taken within the 30-day approval period. See HRS § 343-5(e).

the aquarium fishery, approximately 45% of the aquarium fish caught in the State and nearly 67% of value came from the WHRFMA.<sup>3</sup>

On October 15, 2025, West Hawai‘i beneficiaries appeared at OHA’s Committee on Beneficiary Advocacy and Empowerment to testify in opposition to DAR’s proposal, and to ask OHA for support in addressing the negative effects of commercial aquarium collection in their communities. Subsequently, on October 24, 2025, the BLNR received over five hours of community testimony on the proposal to reopen the industry, overwhelmingly in opposition. During the public hearing, some Board members expressed the opinion that existing law *allowing* DLNR to issue commercial aquarium collection permits, Hawai‘i Revised Statutes (HRS) § 188-31, *requires* that it permit industry participants after they comply with HEPA.<sup>4</sup>

Despite widespread community opposition highlighting ecological and cultural concerns with the proposal, the BLNR voted to send the rules out for public notice and comment, moving one step closer to reopening state waters to commercial aquarium extraction despite the limited economic value of the industry to the state. According to the industry’s own advocates, the aquarium trade in WHRFMA generates between \$499,416 to \$2,022,686 of income per year within the state (as 67% of statewide industry activity), with additional indirect economic benefits.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, healthy coral reefs generate more than **\$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue** and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security, further enhancing their economic value.<sup>6</sup> Costs for DAR to administer the permitting program and police compliance with geographically defined marine protected areas further reduces the value of this industry to the state.

### The Public Trust in Natural Resources Further Supports a Ban

Hawai‘i’s constitutional public trust doctrine, Haw. Const. Art. XI, § 1, requires that public resources be managed for the benefit of present and future generations, with commercial uses that negatively impact these resources disfavored under the law. Where commercial uses are permitted, commercial users have a high burden to justify their needs considering negative consequences on public trust uses including long term preservation of the resource itself. Moreover, where there is scientific uncertainty concerning the effects of

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<sup>3</sup> Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, Revised Final Environmental Impact Statement Issuance of Commercial Aquarium Permits and Commercial Marine Licenses for the West Hawai‘i Regional Fishery Management Area at p.2 (May 26, 2021) (“RFEIS”), *available at* [https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/erp/EA\\_EIS\\_Library/2021-06-08-HA-Revised-FEIS-Hawaii-Island-Commercial-Aquarium-Permits.pdf](https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/erp/EA_EIS_Library/2021-06-08-HA-Revised-FEIS-Hawaii-Island-Commercial-Aquarium-Permits.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> See Board Members Denise Iseri-Matsubara’s and Riley Smith’s statements on the Board’s purported lack of authority to ban commercial aquarium collection, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JE2zPoVp8qs&list=PLDh6ZXzdUvQkHtgVoauOkfa26NfNLh2pK&index=4> at 8:10:27; 7:22:09; 7:55:33.

<sup>5</sup> RFEIS at p. 102.

<sup>6</sup> [Restoring Hawai‘i’s Reefs | The Nature Conservancy](#) (Sept. 16, 2018).

commercial use, the public trust doctrine cautions application of the precautionary principle to preserve resources long term. Native Hawaiian cultural practices are one of the uses constitutionally protected under the public trust doctrine. See *In re Waiāhole*, 94 Haw. 97, 115-142 (2000).

These constitutional principles clearly caution the state against permitting an industry shown to repeatedly impinge upon the interests and concerns of the general public and those most intimately connected to the affected place and ecosystems. Beyond the specific interests of affected communities, businesses, and Native Hawaiian practitioners, up to 84% of Hawai‘i Island and O‘ahu residents favor banning the industry.<sup>7</sup>

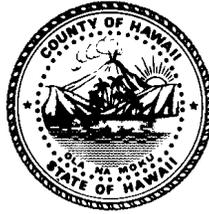
This widespread concern with the aquarium industry points to a fundamental policy question that this legislature must confront: in an age of ecological uncertainty, with coral reefs facing potential extinction within the next fifty years, does the commercial extraction of reef fish serve a beneficial public purpose? OHA respectfully submits that it does not, and urges the legislature to pass this ban to protect Native Hawaiian beneficiaries, Hawai‘i’s nearshore ecosystems, and the broader public interest.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to present testimony. OHA asks that the Committees PASS this bill with the suggested amendments for clarity.

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<sup>7</sup> See [Earthjustice Press Release](#), “Land Board Advances Plan to Re-Open West Hawai‘i Waters to Aquarium Pet Industry,” (Oct. 27, 2025) (citing a recent poll conducted by conducted by Honolulu-based Anthology | FINN Research).

**Holeka Goro Inaba, Ed.D.**  
Council Chair, District 8, North Kona



Office: (808) 323-4280  
Email: holeka.inaba@hawaiicounty.gov

## HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL

County of Hawai'i  
West Hawai'i Civic Center, Bldg. A  
74-5044 Ane Keohokalole Hwy.  
Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96740

**LATE**

February 10, 2026

### COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Chair  
Senator Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair

### COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Senator Chris Lee, Chair  
Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair

RE: **Support for SB2996**, RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.  
Prohibits the harvesting of aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes,  
regardless of the method of collection.

Hearing: **Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.**

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committees,

On behalf of Council District 8 in North Kona, I am writing in strong support of **Senate Bill 2996**.

The intent and policy direction of SB2996 align closely with actions already taken by the Hawai'i County Council. On January 23, 2026, the Council adopted Resolution No. 422, which formally supports the underlying principles advanced by this measure and affirms the County's commitment to coordinated, effective, and equitable implementation of state policy at the local level.

SB2996 provides important statutory clarity and guidance that will assist counties in carrying out their responsibilities more effectively and consistently. From a county perspective, this measure strengthens alignment between state objectives and county operations, supports sound governance, and enhances our ability to respond to community needs in a transparent and accountable manner.

The passage of Hawai'i County Council Resolution No. 422 reflects broad Council recognition that the policy framework addressed by SB2996 is necessary, timely, and in the public interest. Advancing this legislation will reinforce local efforts already underway and ensure that counties have the tools and direction needed to implement state law as intended.

For these reasons, and consistent with Hawai'i County Council Resolution No. 422, I respectfully urge your favorable consideration of SB2996.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your continued dedication to the people of Hawai'i.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Holeka Goro Inaba". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

HOLEKA GORO INABA, Ed.D.,  
Council Chair, District 8, North Kona

HGI.wpb

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 12:56:40 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Erik Stein	Testifying for Extended Horizons Inc	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Do Not allow further preventable degradation to happen to our reefs. Aquarium collection is wasteful and supplies almost nothing in terms of benefits to the residents of Hawaii. Leaving fish on the reef creates a healthy ecosystem that sustains larger fish which in turn help local fishers and families live sustainably. We strongly oppose this bill.



**PUAKŌ FOR  
REEFS**

# A Community Dedicated to Saving Puakō Reef

Return the reef to its historic 70% coral coverage from its existing 7%.

[www.Puako4reefs.org](http://www.Puako4reefs.org) \* [Puako for Reefs Facebook](#)

Story map of Puakō: [Wahi Pana -A Sacred Place](#)

## HEARING FOR STATE SENATE COMMITTEES ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS & WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS Tuesday, February 10, 2026 1:00 p.m. Conference Room 224, State Capitol

**DATE:** February 7, 2026

**TO:** Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs, Chair Tim Richards and Vice-Chair Rachele Lamosao, and all Members.  
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts, Chair Chris Lee and Vice-Chair Lorraine Inouye, and all Members.

**RE: SENATE BILL 2996. RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Puakō For Reefs is in complete agreement with the intent and purpose of SB 2996 to prohibit aquarium fish collection from the wild. Puakō For Reefs is expending massive efforts as well as millions of dollars in community donations, not to mention copious hours of volunteer time, to remove a major stress (wastewater) on the coral in the South Kohala area. To have another stress undermining our efforts and threatening the reef ecosystem is extremely difficult for us to watch.

There are so many relevant facts associated with this practice:

1. Due to the extremely limited number of enforcement resources, illegal poaching occurs on a regular basis. The only way to stop the poaching is to ban aquarium fish collection. This will simplify all the enforcement protocols.
2. Local fishing practices, stewardship and respect for Native Hawaiian values for our oceans are massively neglected. The idea that there is a limitless supply of reef fish is obviously incorrect. The same fish that are heavily collected are the primary algae-eaters, helping to keep our reef alive and healthy.
3. Our state constitution lays out the public-trust obligations to protect our natural resources. Now is a wonderful time to take this more seriously.
4. And, for the sad economic news. Nobody receives any benefits from the aquarium trade while residents, and all tax payers, bear the environmental as well as the enforcement costs.

Please vote in favor of this bill so we can finally get serious about our reef and ocean waters.

Sincerely,

Barbara Bell for Puakō for Reefs Board members and its many volunteers

**Karen Anderson**, Board Chair, 206-724-1551 [Karen.anderson@puako4reefs.org](mailto:Karen.anderson@puako4reefs.org)

**Stephanie Erickson**, Board Treasurer, [Sterphanie.erickson@puako4reefs.org](mailto:Sterphanie.erickson@puako4reefs.org)

**Barbara Bell**, Board Secretary, 808-937-2573, [bbellster@gmail.com](mailto:bbellster@gmail.com)

**George Fry**, Board member. 808-756-3877, [gryiii@gmail.com](mailto:gryiii@gmail.com)

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 1:34:03 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Robert Culbertson	Testifying for Big Island Reef Keeper's hui	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators!

The handwriting has been on the wall for quite some time regarding the need for more realistic reef protections; including a 2011 Hawaii County resolution and another more recent one in 2025. Also passed was a 2018 Democratic Party resolution calling for the same action - the end to commercial Hawaii reef life 'collecting'!

Since then the increasing frequency of devastating 'bleaching events' damaging all reef resources has shown us that time and the inevitability of 'global heating', though not within our control, spell the need to take the utmost preservation actions that we can right now.! *This includes finally picking the low hanging fruit of all reef insults - the self serving, profit hungry, commercial Aquarium Fish trade!*

Please pass this bill in a ringing manner that sends the administrative parties down a true path of sustainability in 2026!

Thank you,

R. A. Culbertson

Honokaa,

Member,

Big Island Reef Keepers hui



# FRIENDS of HANAUMA BAY

CONSERVE • PROTECT • RESTORE

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*Dedicated to the conservation of coastal and marine environments,  
emphasizing stewardship of the natural resources of Hanauma Bay*

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February 10, 2026

TO: Senate Committees on Water & Land and Hawaiian Affairs

RE: STRONG SUPPORT for SB2996 – Relating to Environmental Protection

Aloha Chair Lee, Chair Richards, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for hearing this important bill that is so critical to protecting our marine herbivores and invertebrates.

In 2023, the **Board of Land and Natural Resources unanimously supported** a community-led proposal to **permanently ban commercial aquarium collecting through rulemaking** — then abruptly claimed it lacked the legal authority to do so (at the direction of the State Deputy AG), **directing communities and advocates to pursue a legislative solution instead.**

So Friends of Hanauma Bay joins the vast majority of Hawaii residents testifying in strong support of SB2996 for many reasons, including the following:

- The trade is in **fundamental conflict** with **local culture and Native Hawaiian values**, including pono fishing practices that limit take to what is truly needed.
- It is **inconsistent with mālama ‘āina** and the State’s **constitutional public-trust obligation** to protect natural resources for present and future generations.
- **Published cost-benefit analyses** show residents receive **no public benefit** from the aquarium trade while bearing **all environmental and enforcement costs.**
- The trade uses **unimaginably cruel methods** and **tolerates obscenely high mortality rates** absolutely unthinkable for any other pet trade. But it’s acceptable for our reef wildlife!

We urge you to pass SB2996, and mahalo for this opportunity to testify in its strong support!

With Aloha,

Lisa Bishop, MS  
Friends of Hanauma Bay | President

# HAWAI'I OCEAN LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE



February 10, 2026

Hawai'i State Legislature  
Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs  
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

Re: Testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** for SB2996, Relating to Environmental Protection

Aloha Chairs Richards and Lee, Vice Chairs Lamosao and Inouye, and esteemed members of the committees,

The Ocean Legislative Task Force—a coalition of more than 150 individuals across over 20 organizations statewide—**strongly supports** SB 2996, relating to environmental protection. This measure prohibits the harvesting of aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes, regardless of the method of collection.

SB 2996 responds to long-standing concerns about the ecological and cultural impacts of removing native reef organisms from Hawai'i's waters for the aquarium trade. Coral reef ecosystems are essential to Hawai'i's environment, shoreline protection, and cultural practices, and their long-term health must remain a top priority.

Commercial collection has historically targeted species that play important roles in maintaining reef balance, and heavy extraction can undermine reef resilience and ecosystem function. Prohibiting commercial harvest for aquarium purposes aligns with Hawai'i's public trust responsibilities and strengthens protections for nearshore waters relied upon by communities across the state.

The Task Force also appreciates that the measure preserves allowances for traditional and customary practices, scientific research, and aquaculture under existing authorities, ensuring cultural rights and community uses remain respected while addressing unsustainable commercial extraction.

For these reasons, the Ocean Legislative Task Force respectfully urges the committees to support SB 2996 with a favorable recommendation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

*The Hawai'i Ocean Legislative Task Force advocates for measures that advance cesspool conversion and wastewater management, protect Hawai'i's coral reefs and reef fish, ensure transparent and sustainable implementation of the Green Fee program and long-term environmental staffing, and support other measures that strengthen Hawai'i's coastal and marine ecosystems.*



**SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, AND CULTURE AND THE ARTS  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS**

February 10, 2026

1:00 PM

Conference Room 224

**In SUPPORT of SB2996: RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL  
RESOURCES**

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Aloha Chair Lee, Chair Richards, Vice Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Members of the Committees,

On behalf of our more than 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i **strongly supports SB2996**, which would establish a Hawai'i-wide prohibition on the commercial collection of marine life for the aquarium trade.

Hawai'i's coral reefs and the larger living systems dependent upon them are being severely threatened by human-induced global warming, pollution, and the largely unchecked profit-driven extraction of marine life – including, until recently, commercial aquarium collection. Before the local aquarium collection industry was effectively shut down by court rulings in 2017 and 2021, millions of specimens of marine life, including ecologically and culturally important herbivore species, were taken from our reefs and shipped to private aquarium collectors each year. Not surprisingly, the industry has been and continues to be the center of significant conflict and controversy, with the vast majority of the public, and Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners and subsistence communities in particular, objecting to such large-scale extraction of public trust marine resources solely for ornamental purposes, and the financial benefit of a select few.

Despite this, and even after the Board of Land and Natural Resources voted in support of rules to end commercial aquarium collection, the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) has recently proposed rules that would instead reopen this industry. DAR staff have justified their rule proposal by citing obligations under existing statutes. As agency rulemaking determines *how* an activity is conducted, not *whether* it should be allowed, it is now up to the Legislature to affirm that Hawai'i's ocean wildlife should be used and conserved for the public benefit, not exploited for a gratuitous, harmful, and now defunct industry. The Sierra Club strongly urges the Legislature to take such action and end decades of painful controversy once and for all.

Notably, DAR already struggles to meet urgent needs relating to our reefs and ocean environment. This includes addressing the numerous threats to our marine resources, and leveraging the willingness and ability of communities throughout the islands to help co-manage their nearshore waters. By finally prohibiting commercial aquarium collection, this measure would allow DAR to focus its limited capacity on upholding its critical mission and the public trust in our reef ecosystems, rather than expending disproportionate time and resources on catering to the profit-seeking demands of private interests.

For these reasons, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i respectfully urges the Committees to **pass SB2996**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 8:23:26 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire	Testifying for Ohana Unity Party	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair(s) and Members of the Committees,

My name is Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM, Chairman of the Ohana Unity Party, representing the Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands. As a committed advocate for environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, Native Hawaiian rights, and the path toward true self-sovereignty for our people, I submit this testimony in **\*\*STRONG SUPPORT\*\*** of SB2996.

This essential legislation establishes a statewide prohibition on the commercial harvesting of aquatic life for aquarium purposes, treating our nearshore reefs as protected public trust resources rather than commodities for export to the global pet trade. Hawai'i's coral reefs are vital to our islands' survival, culture, economy, and future independence. The commercial aquarium trade undermines these foundations by depleting key species and conflicting with pono practices. Here are numbered, data-backed reasons why the Committees should support and advance SB2996:

- \*\*Protects Immense Economic Value for Tourism and Local Communities\*\*** NOAA's peer-reviewed studies estimate the total economic value of main Hawaiian Islands coral reefs at **\*\*\$33.57 billion\*\***, incorporating direct benefits from tourism, recreation, and fisheries, plus passive values like public willingness to pay for protection. Annually, reefs contribute **\*\*\$483 million\*\*** in net tourism/recreation benefits to the U.S. economy and up to **\*\*\$1.1 billion\*\*** overall, including **\*\*\$800 million\*\*** in marine tourism and **\*\*\$863 million\*\*** in total economic value to Hawai'i. The aquarium trade offers negligible local returns (residents receive **\*\*zero net benefits\*\*** per cost-benefit analyses) while risking long-term damage to this tourism-driven economy.
- \*\*Prevents Further Depletion of Key Reef Fish Populations\*\*** Herbivorous species targeted by the trade, such as yellow tang (lau'ipala), have declined by up to **\*\*80%\*\*** in collection-heavy areas of West Hawai'i (NOAA and state data as of 2016), with limited to no recovery even after collection pauses (post-2017 in West Hawai'i and 2020 on O'ahu). Resource fish biomass in West Hawai'i dropped **\*\*45%\*\*** from 2008–2018, worsened by aquarium pressures that remove algae grazers essential for preventing coral-smothering overgrowth.
- \*\*Safeguards Vulnerable Reef Ecosystems\*\*** Average live coral cover across Hawaiian survey sites is only **\*\*18%\*\*** (NOAA Coral Reef Assessment and Monitoring Program), leaving reefs highly susceptible to additional stressors like climate change, ocean acidification, pollution,

and overharvesting. Removing herbivorous fish accelerates degradation, threatening biodiversity, storm protection, and overall reef resilience critical to our islands' future.

4. **\*\*Honors Native Hawaiian Traditional and Customary Rights\*\*** The trade disproportionately harms kānaka maoli by depleting species vital for subsistence, cultural, religious, and medicinal practices protected under Article XII, Section 7 of the Hawai‘i State Constitution. Culturally significant fish like yellow tang (lau‘ipala) and others support family sustenance and pono fishing principles ("take only what is needed"). Commercial extraction competes with and reduces availability for these practices, conflicting with Native Hawaiian values and access to healthy nearshore resources.

5. **\*\*Aligns with Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) Advocacy\*\*** OHA actively supports bills like SB2996 (and related measures) to ban commercial aquarium collection. OHA highlights that Hawai‘i is a major global supplier of reef fish to the pet trade (largest in the U.S., third worldwide), with millions exported annually—negatively impacting reef health and kānaka maoli ability to engage in traditional practices, feed families, and maintain ‘āina momona (abundant land/ocean). This ban prioritizes cultural and subsistence needs without restricting scientific, educational, aquaculture, or traditional activities.

6. **\*\*Advances Self-Sovereignty and Pono Resource Management\*\*** By ending an exploitative industry that treats our moana as export goods for foreign markets, SB2996 reinforces constitutional duties under Article XI (conservation and public trust) and Article XII (traditional rights). It empowers local communities and Native Hawaiians to steward resources for future generations, reducing reliance on extractive external interests and building toward greater self-determination and resilience for the people of Hawai‘i. SB2996 provides a balanced, effective approach: a clear prohibition on commercial aquarium harvesting while preserving essential exemptions, including: - Special activity permits for scientific, educational, or propagation purposes (HRS §187A-6), - Captive-breeding and aquaculture (HRS §187A-3.5), - Non-commercial recreational collection under existing rules, - Traditional and customary Native Hawaiian practices, - Taking for personal consumption, bait, or fishpond management. It also repeals outdated reporting requirements (HRS §188-31.5 and parts of §189-11) for efficiency. This bill reflects growing consensus—from OHA, community leaders, Hawaii County Council resolutions, and conservation efforts—that commercial aquarium collection must end to protect our reefs. Enacting SB2996 will position Hawai‘i as a model for marine conservation, cultural respect, and sovereign stewardship.

I urge the Committees to pass SB2996 unanimously and decisively. Our fish belong in our reefs—nourishing our ohana, culture, economy, and path to self-sovereignty—not in pet tanks abroad.

Mahalo nui loa for your kuleana and commitment to protecting Hawai‘i's sacred natural and cultural heritage.

Sincerely, Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I. Ohana Unity Party, Chairman [www.Ohanaunityparty.com](http://www.Ohanaunityparty.com) [Presidentbillionaire@gmail.com](mailto:Presidentbillionaire@gmail.com)

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Aloha e Chairs, Vice Chairs, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

Makani Hou O Kaloko-Honokohau STRONGLY SUPPORTS SB2996 to prohibit commercial aquarium fish harvesting in Hawaii's nearshore marine waters, which should never have been allowed.

If people want to see coral reef fish they can jump in the ocean to visit happy reef fish in their natural habitat where they belong, they can get an aquarium screensaver for their computers, or they can purchase saltwater aquarium fish from commercial sellers who breed and rear saltwater aquarium fish in captivity.

For those who just can't live without aquarium fish, freshwater aquarium fish are widely and abundantly available.

Commercial aquarium fish harvesting of wild marine stocks threatens the biodiversity of Hawaii's nearshore marine life, a balance necessary for healthy coral reef ecosystems which is our first line of defense against coastal erosion, tsunamis, and ocean storm surges.

YOUR SUPPORT FOR SB2996 will help protect the biodiversity of Hawaii's nearshore marine life and healthy coral reefs for Hawaii's future generations. Mahalo Nui Loa for supporting SB2996!



To: The Honorable Chris Lee, Chair, the Honorable Senator Herbert M. “Tim” Richards, Chair, the Honorable Lorraine Inouye, Vice Chair, the Honorable Rachele Lamasao, Vice Chair, and Members of the Water, Land, Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs Committees.

From: Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition (by Ted Bohlen)

Re: **Hearing SB2996 RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Hearing: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 1:00 p.m. CR224

Aloha Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamasao, and Members of the Water, Land, Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs Committees!

The Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition (HIROC) is a group of scientists, educators, filmmakers and environmental advocates who have been working since 2017 to protect Hawaii's coral reefs and ocean.

The Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition **STRONGLY SUPPORTS SB2996!**

This measure is urgently needed because:

- Coral reefs are threatened by climate heating, pollution, and insufficient numbers of herbivorous fish to clean the reefs. Scientists project annual heat-stress events by as early as 2030. Scientific consensus indicates that **up to 70% of Hawai'i's reefs could be lost by mid-century without strong local protections, including increased herbivore abundance and biomass to control algal overgrowth.**
- Food fishers and subsistence communities are paying the price for decades of aquarium collecting. The aquarium trade historically removed 1.8 times more fish from West Hawai'i reefs than all food fishers combined, primarily herbivores (DLNR 2020 Report to the Legislature).

- On O‘ahu, the most heavily targeted aquarium species—again, largely herbivores—have been depleted by approximately 90% on average due in part to aquarium collecting (Grabowsky & Thornhill 2020).

- Data from the DLNR’s Division of Aquatic Resources show that, contrary to earlier assumptions, yellow tang populations have not recovered as biologically or historically expected following the court-ordered cessation of aquarium collecting in late 2017.

Additional benefits of SB2996 include:

- Clear economic benefits to Hawai‘i residents. A peer-reviewed cost-benefit analysis found that **ending the aquarium trade yields net positive economic benefits**, supporting over \$440 million annually in direct and indirect reef-related tourism value.

- Saving taxpayer money. DLNR has estimated that administering the aquarium trade costs the State hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, excluding enforcement, while generating only minimal permit revenue. Ending the trade would eliminate these ongoing public costs.

- Supporting truly **sustainable alternatives**. The only sustainable aquarium trade is one based on aquaculture. Thanks to advances by Hawai‘i researchers and businesses, including the Oceanic Institute and Biota, popular species such as yellow tang are now captive-bred and commercially available without harming wild reef populations.

SB2996 represents a responsible, science-based, and culturally grounded solution that aligns with public opinion, protects reef ecosystems under increasing climate stress, and fulfills the State’s constitutional public-trust obligations.

**Please pass SB2996 to help protect Hawai‘i’s reefs and reef wildlife!**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 12:05:20 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Susan B Roberts Emery	Testifying for Green Party of Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Lee, Chair Richards, Vice Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Lamosao, and honorable Members of Committee,

My name is Susan RobertsEmery, as Co Chair of The Green Party of Hawai'i we stand in VERY STRONG SUPPORT of SB2996. Hawai'i Island County Council members unanimously voted , last month, to permanently ban commercial aquarium collection statewide. Mahalos to Hawai'i County Council to have a strong front of principaled voting against the commercial extraction of reef fish off our coasts! As a REEF member and someone who has submitted REEF surveys I can attest that the Kona coast, is no longer the "Gold Coast". These fish mate for life and when one fish is taken the partner fish will typically die from the trauma. The loss is multiplied with each stolen fish.

I also want to recognize the 2023 Board of Land and Natural Resources unanimously supported a community led proposal to permanently ban commercial aquarium collecting through rule making, then claimed it lacked the legal authority to do so. Next the DLNR's , Division of Aquatic Resources transformed the proposal into a new framework of large-scale commercial extraction of reef fish! What? So much for the strong community opposition, it was ignored.

The fish populations are struggling to recover from decades of overfishing, pollution stresses, and climate change. We are all connected . The aquarium trades fundamental conflict with local culture and Native Hawaiian values, including pond fishing practices that limit take to what is truly needed, makes the ban our only option.

The public trust is fragile, as is our reef system. The State constitution holds a public trust obligation to protect natural resources for present and future Generations. In the faith of Mālama 'Āina we need to be the voice for the voiceless.

The Green Party of Hawai'i stands in strong support of SB2996.

Mālama 'aina

Susan RobertsEmery

Green Party of Hawai'i

Paauilo



Aloha Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Maki Morinoue, and I am testifying on behalf of HULI PAC. HULI PAC is an organization whose mission is to endorse and support candidates and office holders of integrity who serve the 'āina and people of Hawai'i Island.

HULI PAC strongly supports SB2996, which prohibits the harvesting of aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes, regardless of collection method.

Hawai'i's reefs are already under severe stress from climate change, warming seas, pollution, and habitat loss. Reef fish are not decorations — they are essential workers in the reef ecosystem. Herbivorous and grazing fish control algae, support coral recovery, and strengthen reef resilience. Removing them for commercial trade weakens the entire living system that protects our shorelines, food webs, and communities.

Science consistently shows that reef fish populations must increase — not decline — for reefs to survive climate pressures. Allowing commercial aquarium harvest directly contradicts ecosystem recovery goals and long-term reef management science.

This bill is also more aligned with the Board of Land and Natural Resources' (BLNR) Hierarchy of Use Policy (1988), which prioritizes the perpetuation of natural resources, ecosystem health, and cultural and subsistence uses OVER commercial and ornamental purposes. Continuing to allow extraction for ornamental trade conflicts with that hierarchy and with the Board's core responsibility to ensure the perpetuation of life and resource abundance for future generations.

There are now successful captive-breeding programs for popular aquarium species, proving the trade does not need to rely on wild capture. Ending wild harvest encourages innovation while protecting fragile reef ecosystems.

SB2996 provides clarity, enforceability, and true conservation. It removes loopholes, reduces enforcement burden, and fulfills the public trust duty to protect shared natural resources.

Protecting reef fish protects reefs. Protecting reefs protects Hawai'i's culture, food security, economy, and future.

Please pass SB2996.

Mahalo for your attention,  
Maki Morinoue  
Hawai'i Island

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 2:30:48 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mel Malinowski	Testifying for South Kohala Reef Alliance	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The collection and sale of Hawai'ian wild reef fish is detrimental to Hawai'i as a whole. It began without proper community review, and has continued despite sustained community opposition. It is time for the legislature to mandate that it be stopped.

It is well known that reef fish populations have been under stress and have diminished. To continue a practice that benefits only a small group of collectors, while causing collateral damage to the reef and lowering fish populations, is contrary to the best interests of Hawai'i. Those fish are far more valuable living as they have since ancient days, available to be seen again and again by visitors, and to be harvested locally in a pono fashion only.

It is also well known that the fish so captured and exported to the mainland have short life expectancies. Let them stay here as our ancestors did, part of the fabric of Hawai'ian life and culture.

Selling off Hawai'ian resources to the mainland never has turned out to the long term benefit of Hawai'i. Please act to correct this mistake by passing SB2996 out of committee, and supporting and passing it into law.



# SIERRA CLUB

## O'AHU GROUP

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Re: SB2996

Sierra Club Oahu Group would like to express support for SB 2996.

There is nothing pono about taking wild animals from our coasts and selling what survives the trip to foreign shores as decorations.

The trafficking of our reef wildlife must be stopped once and for all

Angela Huntemer-Sidrane

Treasurer,  
Sierra Club Oahu Group



# SIERRA CLUB

## O'AHU GROUP

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PO Box 2577, Honolulu, HI, 96803 | 808-538-6616 ext. 7 | [contact@sierracluboahu.org](mailto:contact@sierracluboahu.org) | [sierracluboahu.org](http://sierracluboahu.org)

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 4:24:38 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mike Moran	Testifying for Kihei Community Assoc. (KCA?)	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and members;

Note We are aware that schedules may be modified this week due to the storm

Our all volunteer, unfunded, non profit rorg. ( [www.gokihei.org](http://www.gokihei.org)) for South Maui ask for your support this action. For several years we have watched countless attempts to stop this rape of Hawaii natural resource some someone's financial profit. Many times we thought it was controlled, only to see it rise up again. Recently we note Yellow Tang are NOT recovering even whe collecting is ceased Please let this be the end of the matter and keep our reef fissh on the reef

Mahalo

Mike Moran for KCA

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 8:45:43 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Blake McNaughton	Testifying for Makahaloa Fishing Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Kākou,

Makahaloa Fishing Association supports SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection. Our reef fish are a critical food source for the 140 ‘ohana that make up Makahaloa Fishing Association. Aquarium collection is NOT pono fishing. Over 50% of the fish taken die prior to market. These resources need to be conserved for the people of Hawaii and not for out of state decoration.



## Hawaii Legislative Council Members

Joell Edwards  
Wainiha Country Market  
Hanalei

Russell Ruderman  
Island Naturals  
Hilo/Kona

Dr. Andrew Johnson  
Niko Niko Family Dentistry  
Honolulu

Robert H. Pahia  
Hawaii Taro Farm  
Wailuku

Maile Meyer  
Honolulu

Tina Wildberger  
Kihei Ice  
Kihei

L. Malu Shizue Miki  
Abundant Life Natural Foods  
Hilo

Chamber of  
Sustainable Commerce  
808.445.7606  
P.O. Box 22394  
Honolulu, HI 96823

**Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, Chair**  
**Senator Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair**  
Committee on Hawaiian Affairs

**Senator Chris Lee, Chair**  
**Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair**  
Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

Tuesday, February 10, 2026  
1:00PM Conference Room 224

RE: SB2996 - Commercial Aquarium Fish - Support

Dear Chair Richards, Chair Lee, Vice Chair Lamosao, Vice Chair Inouye, and  
Members of the Committees,

On behalf of the Chamber of Sustainable Commerce (CSC), we write in support of SB2996, which prohibits the commercial harvesting of aquatic life for aquarium purposes while preserving non-commercial, cultural, and aquaculture practices. The Chamber of Sustainable Commerce represents more than 580 small businesses, sole proprietors and entrepreneurs across Hawai'i committed to a triple bottom line: people, planet and prosperity.

Healthy coral reefs are a cornerstone of Hawai'i's economy, supporting tourism, fisheries, coastal protection, and community wellbeing. The bill cites a NOAA-commissioned study valuing Hawai'i's coral reef ecosystems at \$33.57 billion, highlighting their significance as a long-term economic asset. At the same time, climate change is projected to severely degrade Hawai'i's reefs in the coming decades, making preventative and restorative action essential.

SB 2996 responds to documented impacts of the commercial aquarium trade, including the large-scale removal of herbivorous fish that play a critical role in maintaining reef health. The Legislature finds that some heavily collected species have not recovered as expected, raising concerns about the long-term resilience of reef ecosystems and the fisheries and businesses that depend on them. The bill further recognizes that the cost of managing and enforcing the commercial aquarium trade exceeds its economic benefit to the State.

Protecting public trust resources like coral reefs supports sustainable tourism, food security, and stable local jobs. SB 2996 aligns economic activity with stewardship by ending an extractive practice while allowing traditional and customary practices, food fishing, and regulated aquaculture to continue.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 2:29:45 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nakoolani Warrington	Testifying for Kupuna for the Moopuna	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**SUPPORT OF HB 2996**

Aloha,

We, Kūpuna for the Mo‘opuna, a hui of Hawaiian Homes Commission Act kūpuna beneficiary farmers from Pana‘ewa, Hawai‘i, **testify in SUPPORT of HB 2996.** We must protect nearshore species as public trust resources.

Stop the profit-driven extraction of culturally and ecologically significant species, such as kole. Our public trust marine resources must not be treated as ornaments for foreigners and the state should not have to spend time and energy on a permitting system that supports this foreign ornamental exploitation over our subsistence fishing practices.

Protect Hawaii’s environment. Ban commercial aquarium collection.

**Support and Pass HB 2996.**

Mahalo.



OUR MISSION IS TO PERPETUATE THE LEGACY OF OUR FOREBEARERS BY ADAPTIVELY AND COLLABORATIVELY LEARNING ABOUT, PROTECTING, TENDING, AND RESTORING THE BIOCULTURAL RESOURCES AND PRACTICES OF KEKAHA, NORTH KONA, HAWAI'I ISLAND, FOCUSING ON KA'ŪPŪLEHU

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February 9, 2026

Committee on Hawaiian Affairs & Committee on Water, Land, Culture, and the Arts  
Conference Room 224  
State Capitol  
415 South Beratania Street

Re: Testimony in support of SB2996

Me ka ha'aha'a,

Hui Kahuwai **strongly supports SB2996**. Hui Kahuwai represents the continuation of marine stewardship that spans generations in Kekaha, North Kona of Hawai'i Island. Our mission, shown above, details our commitment to learning about, protecting, tending, and restoring the biocultural resources and practices Kekaha. Our coastline has no surface freshwater sources, making low elevation agriculture particularly difficult. This meant an increased reliance on marine resources to survive and thrive. As a result, the people of Kekaha show a rich history of protecting and actively stewarding marine resources against all types of impacts.

In the scope of centuries, the AQ trade is a relative newcomer to the shores of Hawai'i, but has quickly shown its potential for severe damage. We have remained firm on our stance to not allow this disrespectful and unnecessary industry in Ka'ūpūlehu and Kūki'o. We supported the designation of the Ka'ūpūlehu Fish Replenishment Area (FRA), and helped design and implement a 10-year no-take zone called the Ka'ūpūlehu Marine Reserve. We are currently collaborating with the Department of Aquatic Resources to craft a fisheries management plan with rules to sustainably manage resources and replace the marine reserve with a Fisheries Management Area, which will include reinstating FRA protections.

Hui Kahuwai joined the dozens of communities and over 1300 individuals in 2025 that rallied against re-opening commercial AQ operations in West Hawai'i. We were dismayed the BLNR was of the opinion that they did not have the administrative ability to ban commercial aquarium collection. So, we urge these committees and the entire state legislature to do what the BLNR felt they could not, and listen to the myriad of communities across the pae'āina calling for the end of this destructive trade. Please support SB2996 to ban commercial aquarium collection.

'O mākou nō me ka 'oia'i'o,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Hannah Kihalani Springer'.

Hannah Kihalani Springer,  
Hui Kahuwai President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kaikea Nakachi'.

Kaikea Nakachi,  
Hui Kahuwai Vice President

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 8:54:57 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Robert Wintner	Testifying for Snorkel Bob's Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In Support: SB 2996

Aloha Legislators,

On behalf of Snorkel Bob's staff across Hawaii Island, Maui, Oahu and Kauai, we ask that you pass SB 2996. The aquarium trade has decimated reef wildlife and habitat for too many years. How many years has this taken? It's time to stop.

Hawaii people don't want aquarium collectors on Big Island reefs or any Hawaii reefs, don't want reefs emptied or trashed and sure as hell don't want to pay for enforcement, mitigation or consequence of reef wildlife trafficking for a mainland amusement industry. Enough. It's time!

Thank you,

Robert Wintner, Snorkel Bob's



P.O. Box 8637, Honolulu, HI 96830 808.468.1686 www.mgfhawaii.org

TESTIMONY OF THE MOANALUA GARDENS FOUNDATION  
To the House Committee on Education  
February 10, 2026

**In Support of**

**SB 2996 - RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Aloha Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs:

The Moanalua Gardens Foundation submits testimony in **strong support of SB 2996**.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai'i's people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination. Hawai'i's Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than **\$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue** and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai'i's marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

Founded in 1970, The Moanalua Gardens Foundation was established to preserve and perpetuate the history, native culture, and environment of Hawai'i through education and stewardship.

The Moanalua Gardens Foundation urges the committee **to pass SB 2996**. Mahalo for your attention and consideration.

*Me ke aloha,*  


Ian Keali'i Custino  
*Executive Director*  
Moanalua Gardens Foundation  
ian@mgfhawaii.org

## **Opposed to SB 2996**

**From Ron Tubbs, B.S.N.D. UHM 8-year research degree**

**The passage of SB 2996 ignores Supreme Court decisions that opened the fishery and contravenes EIS laws and the EIS approval process. Send a message to other businesses that Hawaii is closed to them, even if they are eco-friendly and sustainable.**

**Do not pass the unconstitutional bill SB 2996**

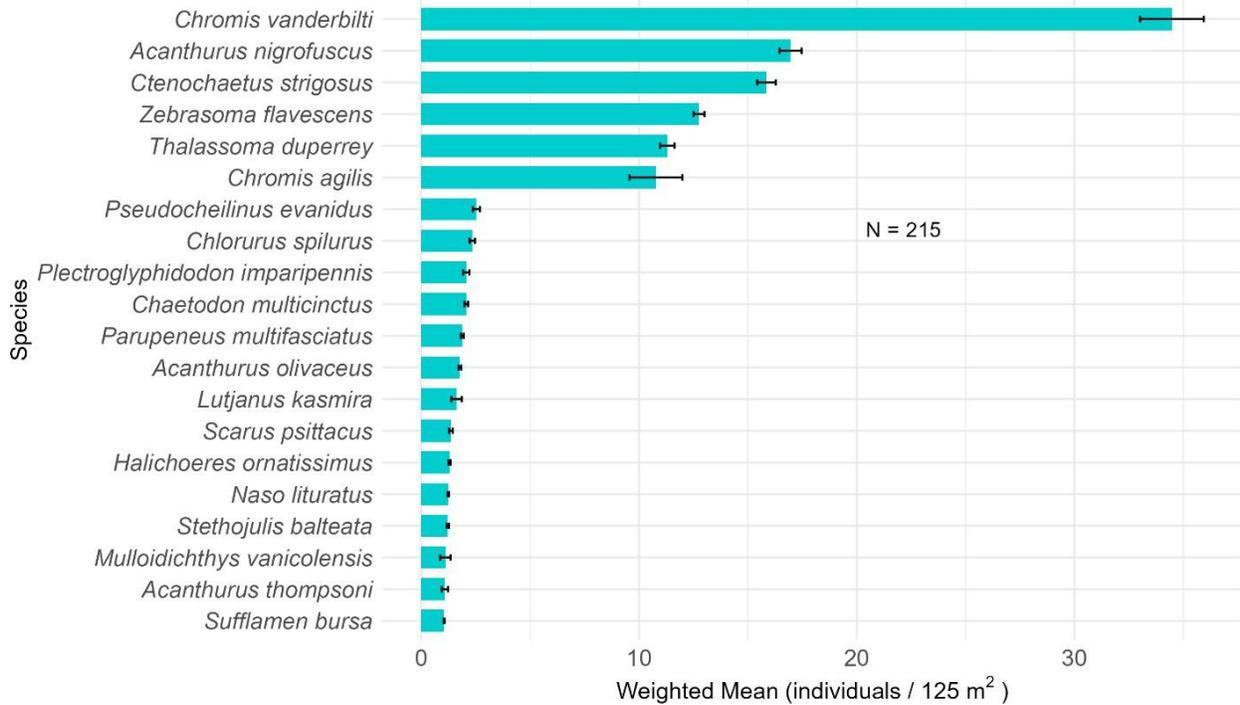
### ***“Hawaii Aquarium Fishery Economic Value with Sustainability”***

During the fishery collections, the highest fish populations were shown. If the fishery were not sustainable, there would have been a decline.

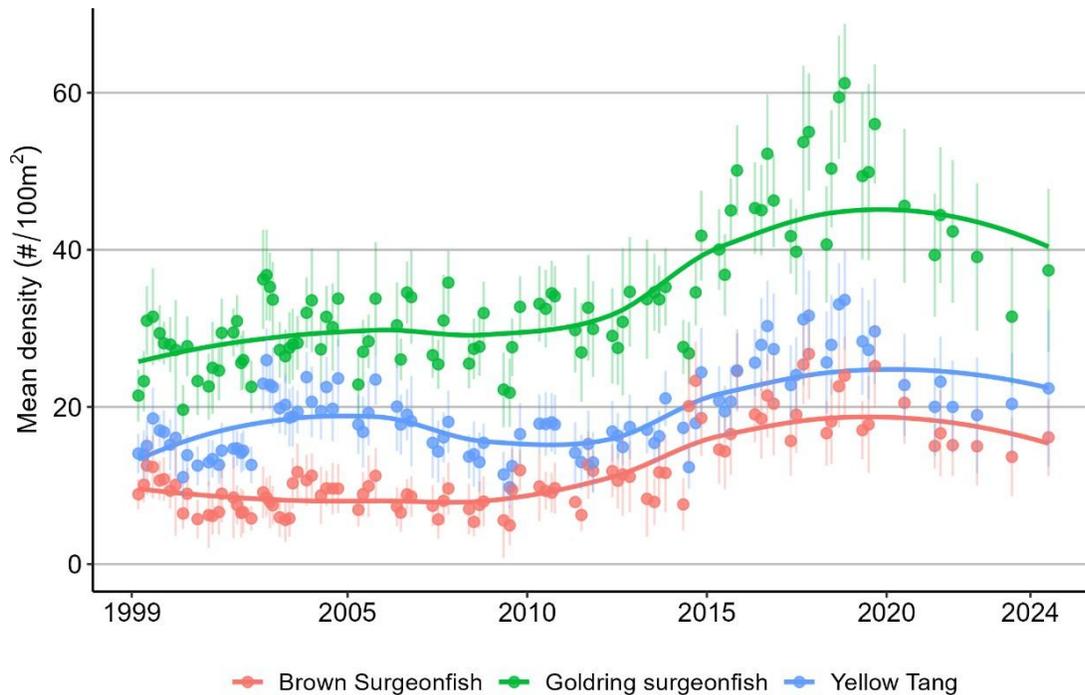
***Ctenochaetus Strigosus Kole Tangs, Zebrasoma flavescens Yellow Tangs are currently among the most populous fish.***

See the findings in the chart below.

Hawaii DC114 2020 Rpt; *Findings and Recommendations of Effectiveness of the West Hawaii Regional Fishery Management Area (WHRFMA) Report*; DLNR.



**Figure 20.** The 20 most abundant reef fish species recorded during 2022-2023 FAHU surveys. Mean density per transect (125 m<sup>2</sup>) weighted by stratum weights with error bars to show weighted standard error for the sample size of 215 surveys across nine strata. Scientific names were used to distinguish species with overlapping Hawaiian names. Translations can be found in Appendix table A-1.



*Figure 23. Mean density of select small surgeonfishes in WHAP surveys. Points represent mean density across 25 WHAP sites for each survey round per species. Error bars represent standard deviation to depict the level of variability between sites. Recruit sized individuals are removed from these data for ma'i'i'i (red), kole (green), and lau'ipala (blue) .*

**This data are significant because, following the closure of the fishery in 2017, no population increase was observed. Meaning the fishery did not affect fish populations. The opposition points out that, 5 years later, populations declined and attributes this to fishery. Natural declines and increases occur.**

## **Aquarium Fish are Ambassadors for Tourism**

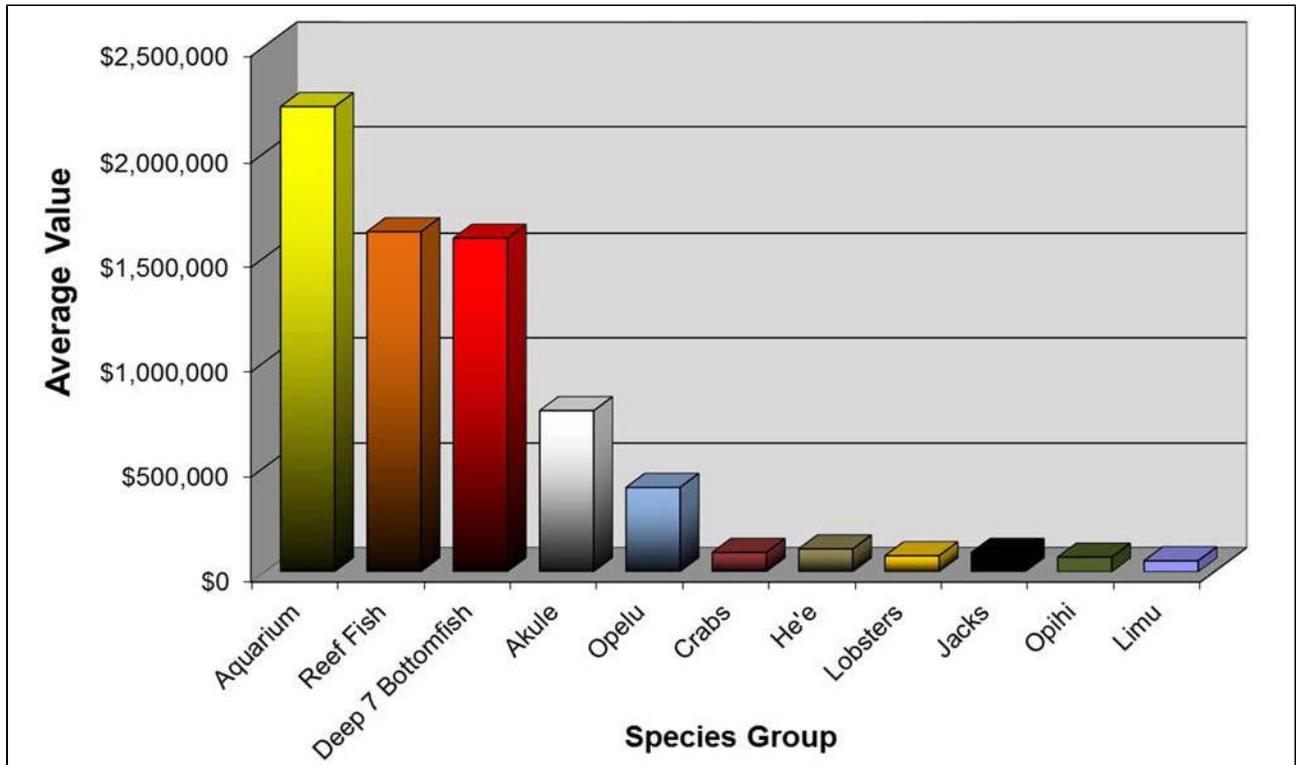
Hawaii's colorful reef fish are "**ambassadors**" for the state's marine ecosystems, exported globally to aquariums and private collectors, raising awareness and promoting tourism, science, sustainability, and fishery husbandry worldwide.

### **Tourism**

Dive shops and Ocean Tour Operators have benefited greatly from the aquarium fishery connection. From sharing great dive spots and sealife locations with tour operators over the years, increasing their experience. Many divers purchase used boat motors from whale and dolphin operators when purchasing new motors, thereby financially supporting these operators' businesses. We have towed tour operators into the harbor and pulled tour boats off the reef countless times.

Fishers, over the years, have avoided and have freely given some of the best fishing spots solely to tour operators, despite laws allowing **the fishers** to fish there. Filling tanks multiple times a week at dive shops, buying expensive dive gear, and supporting the dive shops' operations are invaluable to tour businesses. This aquarium fishery business provides dive shops with a more stable source of income during periods of economic downturn, such as 9/11 and COVID-19. Tourism declined after the shutdown of the aquarium fishery; see the data below.

Tourists worldwide see Hawaiian fish in public aquariums that showcase Hawaii's beauty, alluring tourists to Hawaii. These same aquaria learn and educate others about reef biology and marine biology through fishery husbandry.



**1980 Comparison of the economic value of the fishery harvest in Hawaii.**

### **Who Benefits?**

The Hawaii businesses that have greatly benefited from the tropical fish industry are: boat dealers, boat repair shops, outboard motor mechanics, dive shops, fishing supply stores, aquarium pet stores, pet store wholesalers, box suppliers, bag suppliers, oxygen gas suppliers, aquarium maintenance companies like those in Hospitals and doctor offices, tourist aquariums in Hotels, Sea Life Park, Waikiki Aquarium, gas stations, computer repair, office

supply, interisland cargo shippers, Fish and Wildlife inspections fees, USDA inspections fees, Department of Agriculture fees, DNLR permit fees, and many more.

**All public and private aquaria, aquaculture facilities, and even fishponds in the state rely on live fish which only tropical fishers can catch. These include:** The Natural Energy Center Kailua Kona and its numerous facilities. Sea Life Park, Waikiki Aquarium, Oceanic Institute, Nui Nui Fisheries, Aulani Disney Resort, Maui Ocean Center, UH Hilo Pacific Aquaculture and Coastal Resource Center (PACRC), Kaua'i Ocean Center, Mokupapapa Discovery Center Hilo, Doctor and Hospital, and Aquariums like Shriners for Children.

All fishponds must rely on wild-caught fish kept alive, and aquarium fishers have supplied broodstock to many fish ponds and aquaculture facilities over the years. Some fish entered the gates and then grew to adult food size; however, with current runoff and pollution, an increasing amount of wild-caught broodstock will be needed.

No one knows the fishing grounds and techniques better than aquarium fishers, who provide egg-viable, swim-bladder-intact, healthy brood stock for fish ponds. **Fishponds (Loko I'a):** Ancient Hawaiians constructed nearly 500 walled, brackish, or saltwater ponds for aquaculture, providing a steady food source. One of the 500 pond examples is the Huilua Fishpond.

Following the closure of the fishery in 2017, these businesses lost millions in income. Just one of the 15 aquarium fish wholesalers reported a gross yearly income of over 1.2 million, most of which was allocated to air cargo fees for out-of-state shipments.

Air Cargo support for the Airlines. Just one example is Hawaiian Airlines, which experienced severe financial distress, culminating in a \$1.9 billion acquisition by Alaska Air Group, finalized after the carrier suffered over \$1 billion in losses since 2019 due to the pandemic, high fuel costs, engine issues, and the Maui wildfires.

Despite being acquired, Hawaiian continued to lose approximately \$518,000 daily in 2025, posting a \$189 million loss for the year, which significantly dragged down Alaska Air Group's overall profitability.

In late 2025, monthly imports could exceed \$200 million while exports were under \$40 million, highlighting the imbalance. Significantly less cargo leaves Hawaii, and the HERO reports below stress the importance of increased sustainable renewable exports from the State and its dangerously high dependence on imports. The aquarium fishery could help fulfill those states' needs.

We haven't even touched the surface of the impact that would be felt on the 302-billion-dollar U.S. pet industry. Many companies produce products that benefit from the collection of tropical fish. The following businesses impacted are Aquarium manufacturers, filter manufacturers, aquarium ornament manufacturers, filter, pump, UV sterilizers, protein skimmers, sand filters, pipes, plumbing, fish foods, pet stores, mainland distributors, other countries directly selling into other countries, and the US, Aquarium fish book printers and distributors, all major mainland air carriers, etc.

<https://www.hawaii.edu/news/2024/07/02/economic-diversification-opportunities-uhero/>

### **Where can Hawai'i diversify its economy? UHERO finds areas**

[UH News](#) » [Research](#) » [Where can Hawai'i diversify...](#)

Hawai'i's economy depends heavily on tourism, and is therefore vulnerable to sudden drops in visitor numbers as well as inconsistent and slow growth in tourism revenue for the past 30 years.

A new report, 2024, by the [University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization](#) (UHERO) identifies potential opportunities to diversify the state's economy by analyzing the variety of industries across counties in the U.S. and Hawai'i.

“Based on industries already in Hawai'i, the study shows Hawai'i has great potential for ocean-based industries—such as fishing, fish farming and hatcheries, boat building, port and harbor operations, and seafood packaging. Diversifying into these industries can create long-term stability and support growth beyond tourism”.

**Sustainability** is Key to Hawaii's future. As the most isolated island in the world, Hawaii is too dependent on tourism, the military, and other non-sustainable, [unreliable economic sources](#). [UHERO Forecast for the State of Hawai'i: Mild recession and weak recovery in 2026 - UHERO](#)

The [value of Hawaii's nearshore oceans](#) is worth **15.3 billion dollars** in highly renewable resources in 2024, with a current 50% estimated increase every 20 years, which means one of The state of Hawaii's most valuable resources is our Ocean. *Tourism impacts are Hawaii's biggest ocean ecological offender and the largest source of Carbon Footprint and is not sustainable.*

**Reports show global aquaculture production** (including aquatic plants) in 2016 was 110.2 million tonnes, with the first sale value estimated at US \$244 billion. Three years later, in 2019 the reported output from global aquaculture operations was over 120 million tonnes valued at US \$274 billion. Managing fisheries to their safest environmental output, improved ocean marine management science, and Aquafarming should be Hawaii's "[Blue Revolution](#)" to ensure a sustainable future. *Without decades of expertise and the ability to catch broad stock on a regular basis, aquaculture in Hawaii will not exist with aquarium fishers.*

**The aquarium fishery**, with its higher biomass value and sustainable, highly renewable resources, should be utilized to its fullest to aid the state's plan for a sustainable future.

[University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization](#) report in 2024 by UHERO.

“Hawai'i's economy depends heavily on tourism and is therefore vulnerable to sudden drops in visitor numbers and inconsistent and slow growth in tourism revenue for the past 30 years”. The [University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization](#) (UHERO) analyzes the variety of industries across counties in the U.S. and Hawai'i to identify potential opportunities to diversify the state's economy.

What UHERO found based on industries already in Hawai'i, the study shows Hawai'i has great potential for ocean- based industries—such as *fishing, fish farming* and hatcheries, boat building, port and harbor operations, and seafood packaging. Diversifying into these industries can create long-term stability and support growth beyond tourism.

With science supporting the sustainability of the aquarium fishery an approval of fishery permits could aid the state in its greatly needed shift to sustainable renewable resource uses.

Out of the national 277-billion-dollar pet industry, Hawaii pet owners spent 355 million dollars on pets in 2021. Providing 21.8 million state tax revenues and 27.3 million local tax revenues. Hawaii residents have 1.7 pets per household on average. Nearly 57% of Hawaii households have one pet. That is 11% of U.S. household's fish. Taping into the sustainable renewable income aquarium fishing can provide sustainable economic benefits. **Marine fish used as pets are worth per fish as much as % 400 more than those similar fish used for food purposes.** Pet fish leave breeders' sizes to make it a **“Model Fishery.”** Declines in food fish near shore near human-populated areas have not been seen in reef fish used for aquarium purposes.

## **Hawaii Controls It's Own Future**

Demographic studies have shown that in the future, many of our global, nonrenewable resources, such as oil and minerals, will be depleted as the world population increases, leaving states to rely more on their own resources.

In years to come, it will be crucial for Hawaii to rely more on its own renewable marine resources. Restricting access to marine resources without fully considering the impact of legislation on the future of Hawaii's fishermen and the State's economy would be a grave mistake.

To maintain our economy, we must utilize our renewable resources with wisdom.

<https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/databook/>

[https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/databook/2020-individual/\\_23/](https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/databook/2020-individual/_23/)

Fish counts from 1999 to 2017 show an increase in fish counts according to the 2020 West Hawaii report to the Legislature, Overall Yellow Tang abundance in the 30'-60' depth range over the entire West Hawai'i coast is estimated to have increased by over 3.4 million fish from 1999/2000 to 2017/2018 (150% increase) to a current population of about 5.7 million fish within this depth range alone.

Why are declines in fish populations reported at tourism dive and snorkel sites? Are they really attributed to the aquarium fishery?

### **Tourism Effects on Fish Populations**

[News article](#) discusses the loss of fish in tourist areas.

Ocean tourism has been linked to declines in ocean fish. [Recent studies](#) have shown that fish returned to Hanauma Bay when tourism ceased due to COVID-19. Now that tourism has returned to the bay, more research has shown that [fish are disappearing](#) again! The large groups of tourists have scared the fish out of these areas. A similar study was done on Maui

Graham, Andrew T. *The Effects of Human Presence on Fish Behavior at the Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve, Hawai'i During and Immediately Following the COVID-19 Pandemic Closure*. Diss. 2024.

### **Molokini also showed a decrease in fish populations due to tourism.**

Weng, Kevin C., et al. "Decreased tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic positively affects reef fish in a high use marine protected area." *Plos one* 18.4 (2023): e0283683.

We found that when tourism shut down due to COVID restrictions in 2020, fish biomass increased and predatory species increased usage of shallow habitats, where tourists typically concentrate. When tourism resumed, fish biomass and habitat use returned to pre-pandemic levels. These displacement effects change fish community composition and biomass, which could affect key processes such as spawning, foraging and resting, and have knock-on effects that compromise ecosystem function and resilience. Management of non-consumptive uses, particularly in heavily visited MPAs, should be considered to sustain these ecosystems.

The large groups of tourists have scared the fish out of these areas. Large groups of tourists snorkeling and diving significantly affect fish feeding and reproductive behavior, thereby influencing fish populations. Unlike tourists, fishermen do not frequent the same areas repeatedly in large numbers; they rotate their sites to prevent overfishing. Are tourism impacts being used to blame the aquarium fishery? Aquarium fishermen do not go to tourist areas. The 20-year fish replenishment aquarium fish counts from West Hawaii show an increase in overall fish populations; why are tourist areas experiencing fewer fish?

**To address this, tourist dive sites should be rotated to maintain high fish populations.**

High sustainability and low environmental impacts of the fishery have been reported by state researchers; no coral or algal changes have been observed in the fishery's fishing areas. In fact, coral damage was greater in tourism areas, as reported in the West Hawaii Report to the Legislature ([link above](#)).

**Populations of the most targeted fishery and their value.**

So on Oahu alone, 414 billion 550 million new yellow tang fry <98ft times 1% survival adult stage per year, divided by two for one male and one female pair, results in an estimated 4 billion 145 million potential new adult stage yellow tangs on Oahu reefs every year. The estimate does not account for reduced fecundity at larger sizes or for increased populations at depths greater than 98 feet. It also does not account for the much

greater populations that we know exist and extend deeper than 98 feet, so these figures are very conservative.

With a conservative maximum sustainable yield of 25%, catch that would equal 1 billion 36 million sustainable catches, with a 2024 value of \$169.00 per tank-raised yellow tang. Here are some numbers for just one fish in the trade.

**That would mean a potential income of \$175 billion in highly renewable, sustainably caught fish for yellow tangs on Oahu alone.**

**This total would be substantially higher in West Hawaii, which has a population of 5.7 million yellow tang. A sustainable catch of 1.425 million would be valued at \$240 billion for West Hawaii.**

### **Tourism Economic Impact of Aquarium Fishery, The Data**

West Hawaii Tourist Accommodations for Hawaii County declined following the closure of the fishery in 2017. See totals in red. Similar declines are noted in overall tourism income for the years following the 2017 aquarium fishery closure.

The relevance of these declines may not be fishery-associated, but there is, definitively, no statistical evidence of any decline in economic value to the State from keeping the fishery closed.

**Table 23.31-- VISITOR ACCOMMODATIONS, BY COUNTY: 1985 TO 2**

[Number of units]

Year	State total	City & County of Honolulu	Hawaii County	Kauai County
1985	65,919	38,600	7,511	5,656
1986	66,308	39,010	7,280	5,922
1987	65,318	38,185	7,328	5,956
1988	69,012	37,841	8,823	7,180
1989	67,734	36,467	8,161	7,398
1990	71,266	36,899	8,952	7,546
1991	72,275	36,623	9,383	7,567
1992	73,089	36,851	9,170	7,778
1993	69,502	36,604	9,140	4,631
1994	70,463	36,194	9,595	5,870
1995	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
1996	70,288	36,146	9,558	6,760
1997	71,025	35,971	9,913	6,589
1998	71,480	36,206	9,655	6,969
1999	71,157	35,861	9,815	6,872
2000	71,506	36,303	9,774	7,159
2001	72,204	36,824	9,944	7,202
2002	70,783	36,457	9,297	7,037
2003	70,579	35,541	9,478	7,257
2004	72,176	35,769	9,857	8,105
2005	72,307	33,926	10,940	8,221
2006	72,274	33,606	10,831	8,266
2007	73,220	33,588	11,061	8,692
2008	74,177	34,081	11,240	9,203
2009	75,198	34,027	11,541	9,469
2010	74,988	33,782	11,479	9,344
2011	77,731	35,001	11,113	9,872
2012	74,650	35,326	10,594	8,289
2013	73,959	35,690	10,903	8,675
2014	73,716	35,864	10,666	8,492
2015	77,138	36,058	11,085	8,582
2016	79,092	37,400	11,349	8,444
2017	80,709	38,879	11,286	8,821
2018	80,751	39,089	10,811	9,022
2019	80,554	39,240	10,505	9,036
2020	81,188	38,806	11,123	9,250

NA Not available.

Source: Hawaii Tourism Authority, *2020 Visitor Plant Inventory*, "Table 1: Available Units by to 2020" <<https://www.hawaiiitourismauthority.org/research/visitor-plant-inventory/>> accessed Ma

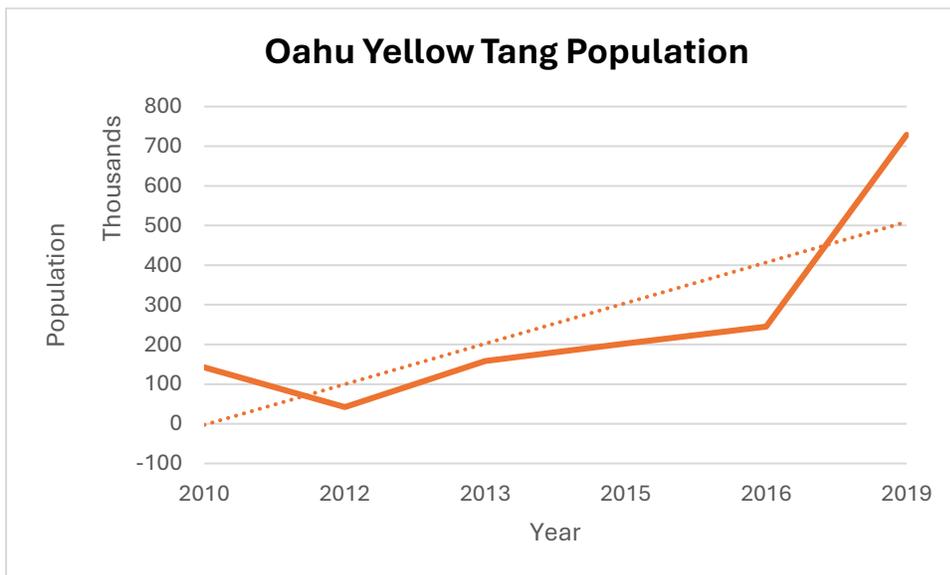
Thus, the loss of the Aquarium Trade harms tourism economically.

The loss of the Hawaii Aquarium Trade and its effects on the worldwide pet trade are even deeper. Here are some economic numbers behind the benefits of the aquarium trade.

Sustainability is clear. DAR researchers have been clear on this repeatedly.

### The Facts Oahu Yellow Tang CML take stats:

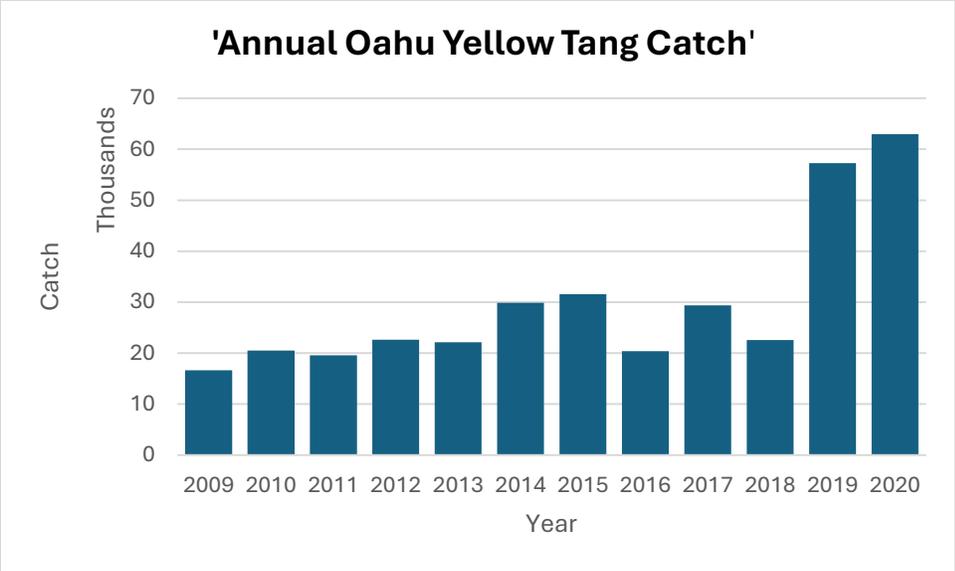
Oahu Yellow Tang, *Zebrasoma flavescens*, DAR Catch Report Data for the Aquarium Fishery between 2009 to 2020, comparison to Fish Populations 2010 to 2019 done by PIFSC, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC). One would expect to see an inverse relationship in these charts if the fishery were not sustainable. The Oahu Aquarium Fishery's most targeted species, Yellow Tangs, from 2009 to 2020, has the following data that supports the fishery despite increased take being done at a sustainable level.



2010 to 2019 done by PIFSC, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC)

Yellow Tangs *Zebrasoma flavescens* 2010-2019 Oahu Population Hard Bottom

0-98 ft only. Currently done only every three years. Data is only available for the years of surveys listed above

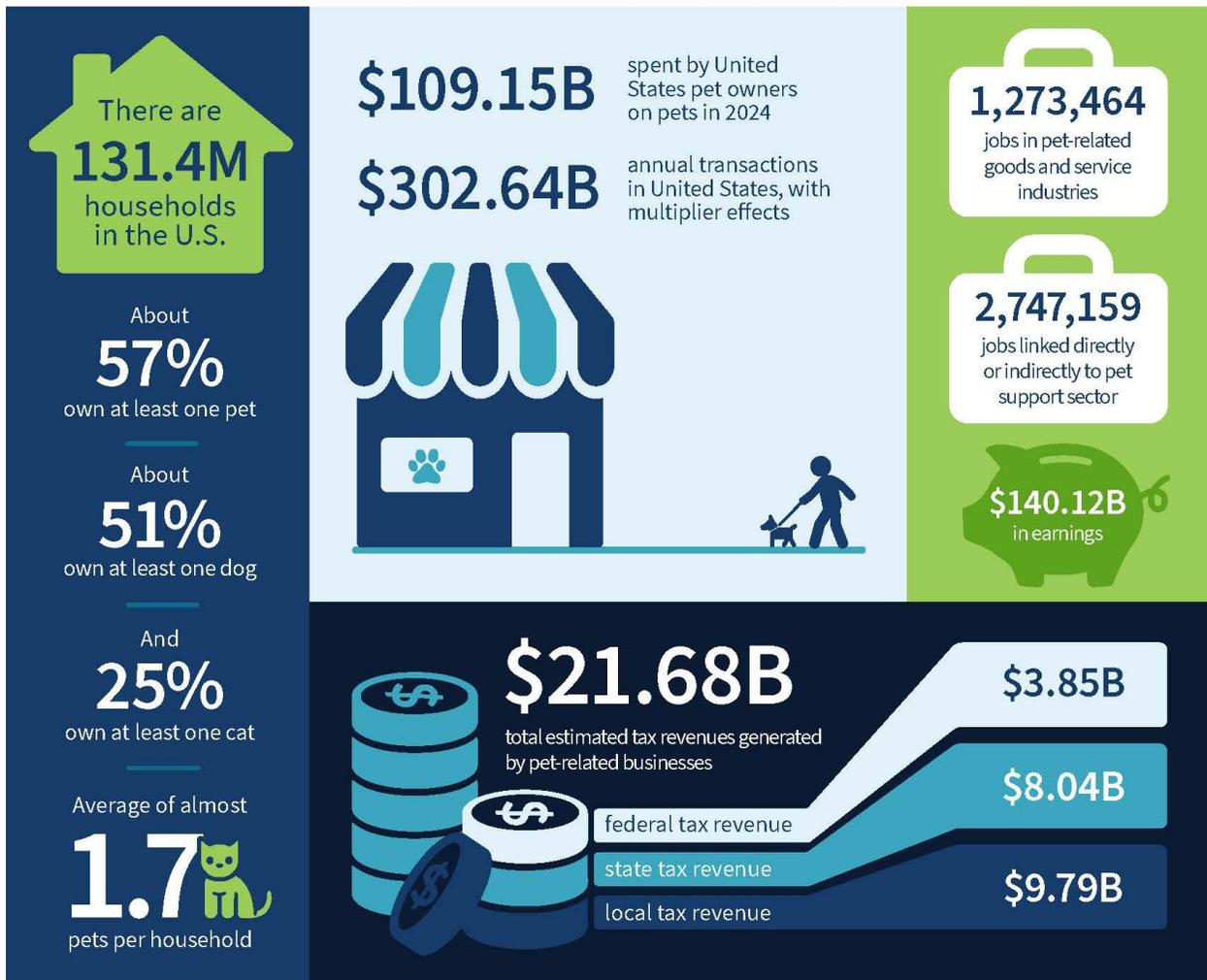


DAR Catch Report Stats Yellow Tangs *Zebrasoma flavescens* 2009-2020

**Clearly, Fish Counts and all available data show a Sustainable Fishery!**

# ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE U.S. PET SECTOR

The American pet sector that supports 2.75 million jobs nationwide. The U.S. pet sector contributes \$303 billion directly and indirectly to America's economy and \$217 billion in annual gross domestic product. The care and companionship of pets is integral to not only the emotional and physical well-being of people, but also to the strength and stability of our economy.



\* Expenditures of United States pet-owning households include all related expenditures based on a survey of pet owners conducted by the American Pet Products Association and the American Veterinary Medical Association. Economic Impact Data sourced from: Knudson B, Miller S. The Economics of the US Pet Food and Pet Supply Industry. Product Center and Center for Economic Analysis, Michigan State University, March 2024. Pet ownership data sourced from: APPA National Pet Owners Survey: 2023-2024.



Sources:

An extensive, detailed environmental review is available upon request.

Source [in-text links](#) and now below:

Jablonski D (1986) [Mass and background extinctions: the alternation of macroevolutionary regimes.](#) *Science* 231:129–133

Raup DM (1991) [A kill curve for Phanerozoic marine species.](#) *Paleobiology*. 17:37–48.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/animals-with-most-offspring-fish-eggs-reproduction>

Forsgren, Kristy, et al. "Reproductive biology of the ocean sunfishes." *The Ocean Sunfishes* (2020): 87- 104.

Rønsted, Nina, et al. "Extinction risk of the endemic vascular flora of Kauai, Hawaii, based on IUCN assessments." *Conservation Biology* 36.4 (2022): e13896.)

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2020/12/impact-of-the-pandemic-on-tourism-behsudi>

<https://www.westhawaii.com/2020/06/25/opinion/my-turn-we-expect-better-hawaiitropicalaquariumfish>

<https://files.hawaii.gov/dlnr/reports-to-the-legislature/2020/AR20-WHRFMA-Rpt-FY19.pdf>

ME Bushnell, [JT Claisse](#), CW Laidley - *Journal of Fish Biology*, 2010

Eble JA, Toonen RJ, Sorenson L, Basch LV, Papastamatiou YP, Bowen BW (2011) Escaping paradise: larval export from Hawaii in an Indo-Pacific reef fish, the yellow tang *Zebrasoma flavescens*. *Mar Ecol Prog Ser* 428:245-258. <https://doi.org/10.3354/meps09083>

([Lough et al., 1999](#)) ([Bagnato et al., 2004](#); [Damassa et al., 2006](#); [Cantin et al., 2010](#))

Muir, Paul R., et al. "Species identity and depth predict bleaching severity in reef-building corals: shall the deep inherit the reef?." *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 284.1864 (2017): 20171551

Two major West Hawaii studies show that the aquarium fishery has no major impact on corals or detrimental effects on algae growth compared to closed habitats without aquarium fishing. (B.Tissot, B. Walsh) Isoun, E., et al. "Multi-spectral mapping of reef bathymetry and coral cover; Kailua Bay, Hawaii." *Coral Reefs* 22 (2003): 68-82.

(Adey, Walter H. "Coral reefs: algal structured and mediated ecosystems in shallow, turbulent, alkaline waters." *Journal of Phycology* 34.3 (1998): 393-406).

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*The Effects of Venting and Decompression on Mortality and Sublethal Effects in Yellow Tangs (Zebrasoma Flavescens) Caught for the West Hawaii Aquarium Trade.* Diss. Washington State University, 2012.

Mathew, K. J. "Net avoidance behaviour among larval, juvenile and adult euphausiids." *Journal of the Marine Biological Association of India* 30.1&2 (1988): 93-98.

De Robertis, Alex, and Nils Olav Handegard. "Fish avoidance of research vessels and the efficacy of noise-reduced vessels: a review." *ICES Journal of Marine Science* 70.1 (2013): 34-45.

<https://www.fishbase.se/search.php>

[\(https://www.iucnredlist.org/](https://www.iucnredlist.org/)

Effectiveness of the West Hawai'i Regional Fishery Management Area (WHRFMA) that overall fish populations of targeted aquarium fish species increased significantly in West Hawaii over 20 years. "Overall Yellow Tang abundance in the 30'-60' depth range over the entire West Hawai'i coast is estimated to have increased by over 3.4 million fish from 1999/2000 to 2017/2018 (150% increase) to a current population of about 5.7 million fish within this depth range alone. Over time, management and habitat increases due to coral growth contribute to increased fish populations. Overall Kole abundance in the 30'-60' depth range over the entire West Hawai'i coast is estimated to have increased 118% (>5.1 million fish) during this time period with a current estimated population of almost 9.6 million fish. As with Yellow Tang, summer 2014 recruitment for Kole in many areas was very strong.

Recruitment at the Manuka survey site for example was 254% higher than on any other previous survey at the site over the last 20 years." (WHRFMA)

Shomura, Richard. "A historical perspective of Hawai'i's marine resources, fisheries, and management issues over the past 100 years." *Status of Hawaii's coastal fisheries in the new millennium, revised 2004 edition. Proceedings of the 2001 fisheries symposium sponsored by the American Fisheries Society, Hawai'i Chapter.* 2004.

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Ogawa, Thomas, and Christopher L. Brown. "Ornamental reef fish aquaculture and collection in Hawaii." *Aquarium Sciences and Conservation* 3 (2001): 151-169.

Tissot, Brian N., William J. Walsh, and L. E. Hallacher. "The effectiveness of marine protected areas and the impacts of aquarium fish collecting in Hawai'i." *Hawaii Coral Reef Initiative, University of Hawaii* 1 (2002).

<https://files.hawaii.gov/dlnr/reports-to-the-legislature/2020/AR20-WHRFMA-Rpt-FY19.pdf>

Wood, Elizabeth. "Global advances in conservation and management of marine ornamental resources." *Aquarium Sciences and Conservation* 3.1 (2001): 65-77.

Gove, Jamison M., et al. "West Hawai'i integrated ecosystem assessment ecosystem status report." (2019).

[Friedlander, Alan M. \(Alan Marc\) ; Donovan, Mary K. ; Stamoulis, Kostantinos ; ...  
https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/907/noaa\\_907\\_DS1.pdf](https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/907/noaa_907_DS1.pdf)

Hoggarth, Daniel D. *Stock assessment for fishery management: A framework guide to the stock assessment tools of the fisheries management and science programme*. No. 487. Food & Agriculture Org., 2006.

Hoggarth, Daniel D. *Stock assessment for fishery management: A framework guide to the stock assessment tools of the fisheries management and science programme*. No. 487. Food & Agriculture Org., 2006.

DAR BLNR Presentation 2024 <https://youtu.be/djtlsvg7qs?feature=shared>

Oahu there is a much greater refuge area than West Hawaii. Sources; 2013 By [Friedlander, Alan M. \(Alan Marc\) ; Donovan, Mary K. ; Stamoulis, Kostantinos ; ...  
https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/907/noaa\\_907\\_DS1.pdf](https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/907/noaa_907_DS1.pdf)

Asher, Jacob. *A deeper look at Hawaiian coral reef fish assemblages: a comparison of survey approaches and assessments of shallow to mesophotic communities*. Diss. Curtin University, 2017.

. Oahu fared much better during these coral bleaching events. Jokiel, Paul L., and Eric K. Brown. "Global warming, regional trends and inshore environmental conditions influence coral bleaching in Hawaii." *Global Change Biology* 10.10 (2004): 1627-1641.

(<https://myfwc.com/research/saltwater/fishstats/commercial-fisheries/marine-life-tropical-ornamentals>)

### **Regulated Fishing Areas on O'ahu**

<https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dar/fishing/fishing-regulations/regulated-areas/regulated-fishing-areas-on-oahu/>

Eble, J. A., Toonen, R. J., Sorenson, L., Basch, L. V., Papastamatiou, Y. P., & Bowen, B. W. (2011). Escaping paradise: larval export from Hawaii in an Indo-Pacific reef fish, the yellow tang *Zebrasoma flavescens*. *Marine Ecology Progress Series*, 428, 245-258.

Williams, I. D., et al. "Impacts of a Hawaiian marine protected area network on the abundance and fishery sustainability of the yellow tang, *Zebrasoma flavescens*." *Biological Conservation* 142.5 (2009): 1066- 1073.

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Claisse, Jeremy T., et al. "Habitat-and sex-specific life history patterns of yellow tang *Zebrasoma flavescens* in Hawaii, USA." *Marine Ecology Progress Series* 389 (2009): 245-255.

*Cultural Significance*

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:57:39 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Spencer Roberts	Testifying for Fish Defender	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

89% of marine fish species sold in the aquarium trade are sourced exclusively from the wild (Lin et al. 2025). The countless thousands of wild reef fish legally trafficked into this trade from Hawaiian ecosystems are not used for captive breeding, and typically cannot be due to their life cycles. Industry data indicate on-site mortality rates of roughly 50%, with an additional 30% at each subsequent stage in the supply chain (Rubec & Cruz 2005). Populations of reef fishes do not necessarily recover from this trade, even years after its prohibition (Grabowsky, forthcoming). Dive ecotourism generates millions of dollars and thousands of jobs in Hawai'i, orders of magnitude more than the aquarium collection industry. The capture and death of each of these animals is a tragic loss, not only of their inherent value as wild animals, but to the function of their ecosystem and the heritage of Hawai'i. You now have an opportunity to end this horrific trade. Please do the right thing.



# Environmental Caucus of The Democratic Party of Hawai'i

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February 9, 2026

To: Committee on Hawaiian Affairs  
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Chair  
Senator Rachel Lamosao, Vice Chair

Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts  
Senator Chris Lee, Chair  
Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair

Re: SB 2996 re Aquarium Fish Collection  
Hearing: Tuesday, February 10, 2026, 1:00 pm, Conf Room 224 & video  
Position: STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha, Members of the Senate Committees on Hawaiian Affairs and on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts!

The approximately 6,680 members of the Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i strongly support SB 2996. It has been many years that we have joined other groups in struggling to stop the environmentally wasteful and devastating, rampant collection of our reef fish for the aquarium pet trade. As the first section of this bill notes, our coral reefs are already being severely damaged by climate change.

The Environmental Caucus would add the continued use of **cesspools** is also killing our reefs, and the unrealistic far-out deadline of 2050 for upgrade of all cesspools encourages people not take any action for another quarter century!!

The species of reef fishes that are popular with the aquarium trade are precisely the herbivorous species that protect the reef from overgrowth of algae, which kills the reefs.

Our reefs need this long-overdue relief! Please pass this bill! Mahalo, and thank you, Committee Chair Chris Lee for introducing it.

Respectfully,

Alan B. Burdick and Mike Ewall, co-chairs  
Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i  
[Burdick808@gmail.com](mailto:Burdick808@gmail.com) 808-927-1500

[Mike@energyjustice.net](mailto:Mike@energyjustice.net)

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:42:38 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
David McGuire	Testifying for Shark Stewards	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

On behalf of Shark Stewards, a USA shark and marine conservation non-profit with a chapter in Kailua-Kona HI, we strongly support a **statewide ban on commercial aquarium collecting for the pet trade**

We live and dive near Kahal'u and Kaleakekua and have seen the fish and reef rebound after the closure to the Aquarium fish collection. These grazing reef fish maintain the health fo the reef and benefit tourism and jobs at the beach park.

- Alarmingly, a recent **independent expert scientific analysis** of DAR's own data confirms that following the 2017 court-ordered shutdown of the aquarium collectiong, **yellow tang populations failed to recover as biologically and historically expected.**
- **Compounding the problem,** DAR has sharply reduced reef fish monitoring. After more than 20 years of scientifically robust surveys, West Hawai'i aquarium fish monitoring was cut from **4–6 survey rounds per year to just one,** leaving the State effectively blind to the status of reef fish populations already depleted by decades of aquarium collecting.

**Additional reasons the aquarium trade must be permanently banned**

- Ongoing **illegal poaching** for the aquarium trade, despite **four criminal convictions in the past five years involving at least ten industry members.**
- The trade's fundamental conflict with **local culture and Native Hawaiian values,** including pono fishing practices that limit take to what is truly needed.
- Its inconsistency with **mālama 'āina** and the State's **constitutional public-trust obligation** to protect natural resources for present and future generations.
- **Published cost-benefit analyses** showing residents receive **no public benefit** from the aquarium trade while bearing **all environmental and enforcement costs**

**Malama for yuor pono to help ensure Hawai'i's reefs — and the life they support —remain protected now and for generations to come.**



SENATOR CHRIS LEE, CHAIR  
SENATOR LORRAINE R. INOUE, VICE CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE, AND THE ARTS

SENATOR HERBERT M. "TIM" RICHARDS, III, CHAIR  
SENATOR RACHELE LAMOSAO, VICE CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY IN **STRONG SUPPORT** OF SENATE BILL 2996,  
**WITH OHA'S PROPOSED AMENDMENTS**

Tuesday, February 10, 2026  
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

Dear Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, Chair Richards, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Committee Members:

Earthjustice submits this testimony in **strong support** of SB 2996, which would ban commercial aquarium collection statewide. We also **support the Office of Hawaiian Affairs' proposed amendments**, which would additionally repeal Haw. Rev. Stat. § 188-31 and more completely fulfill the legislation's purpose.

Earthjustice is a public interest environmental law organization with a Mid-Pacific Office based in Honolulu for more than 30 years. For over a decade, we have represented a hui of reef advocates—including Native Hawaiian subsistence fishers and cultural practitioners from throughout the pae 'āina—to protect Hawai'i's reefs from the extraction hundreds of thousands of fish each year to supply the global aquarium pet industry.

In 1953, Hawai'i's territorial legislature passed a law allowing "aquarium fish permits" that would enable collectors to use fine-meshed nets to capture juvenile fish targeted by the commercial aquarium trade. See Haw. Rev. Stat. § 188-31. This law was based on the mistaken view that fish sought after by the industry are "not edible." S. Stand. Comm. Rep. 442, in 1953 Senate Journal, at 669. Commercial aquarium collectors target popular food fish including kole (goldring surgeonfish) and pāku'iku'i (achilles tang), herbivorous fish that are essential to coral reef health, and other colorful fishes that are found nowhere else in the world—all of which are culturally significant for Native Hawaiians. Because of this outdated legislation, commercial aquarium collectors have enjoyed a decades-long pass to extract hundreds of thousands of fish

from Hawai'i's reefs annually, which has devastated nearshore ecosystems by reducing fish populations and directly damaging reefs through harmful collection methods.

Due to Hawai'i supreme court rulings mandating environmental review, no aquarium fish permits have been issued in Hawai'i since late 2017. Now that some of the follow-up litigation has ended, the state Board of Land and Natural Resources is planning to resume issuing aquarium fish permits, starting with seven West Hawai'i permits. O'ahu's reefs are next in line for permits that could be issued to fifteen collectors. The Board is taking these steps based on its view that it lacks the power to ban commercial aquarium collection and that only the legislature can ban this extractive activity. Indeed, at the October 24, 2025 Board meeting approving rulemaking proceedings to reopen West Hawai'i to commercial aquarium collection, Chair Chang directed the dozens of community members who testified in opposition to the Board's action as follows: "I would urge you to talk story to the legislators for a different fix."<sup>1</sup>

SB2996 proposes to ban commercial aquarium collection by adding this prohibition as a new section to Haw. Rev. Stat. ch. 189; repealing Haw. Rev. Stat. § 188-31.5 (governing receipts for the sale of aquarium collected fish and aquatic life to commercial marine dealers); and removing reference to commercial aquarium collection from Haw. Rev. Stat. § 189-11 (same). **OHA proposes to also repeal Haw. Rev. § 188-31**, which would avoid ambiguity among statutes and more completely eliminate this harmful practice.

For the first time since the territorial legislature enacted Haw. Rev. Stat. § 188-31, Hawai'i's reefs have finally had a break from commercial aquarium collection. Now that the Board is on the precipice of reopening Hawai'i's reefs to this destructive activity, the legislature is presented with a rare opportunity to right historical wrongs and fulfill its constitutional duties to protect Hawai'i's reef ecosystems as public trust and culturally significant resources for present and future generations. See Haw. Const. art. XI, § 1; Haw. Const. art. XII, § 7.

If the legislature does not act and the Board proceeds as planned, collectors would pay just \$100 per year (\$700 in total for 7 West Hawai'i collectors) for a program that the Division of Aquatic Resources has estimated would cost the state \$300,000-\$500,000 annually to administer for Hawai'i Island alone.<sup>2</sup> Collectors would extract hundreds of thousands of fish and ship them overseas to sell as ornamental pets, while Hawai'i's reefs increasingly struggle to feed local

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<sup>1</sup> See Board of Land and Natural Resources Oct. 24, 2025 Meeting, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JE2zPoVp8qs&list=PLDh6ZXzdUvOkHtqVoauOkfa26NfNLh2pK&index=4> at 8:10:27; see also id. at 7:22:09 and 7:55:33 (Board Members Denise Iseri-Matsubara's and Riley Smith's statements on the Board's purported lack of authority to ban commercial aquarium collection).

<sup>2</sup> See Schaar & Cox, The future for Hawai'i's marine aquarium fishery: A cost benefit analysis compared to an environmental impact statement, Marine Policy (2021) (attached).

families and withstand climate change. We strongly urge your committees to prioritize pono food fishing and reef resilience to benefit all Hawai'i citizens over an extractive practice that benefits only a handful of commercial collectors.

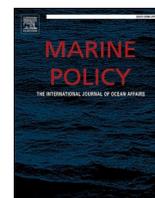
Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or for further information.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kylie W. Wager Cruz', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kylie W. Wager Cruz, Esq.  
Senior Attorney  
Earthjustice, Mid-Pacific Office

Attachment



# The future for Hawai'i's marine aquarium fishery: A cost benefit analysis compared to an environmental impact assessment

Siena I. Schaar<sup>\*</sup>, Linda J. Cox

Department of Land and Natural Resources, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 1910 East-West Road, Sherman Laboratory 101, Honolulu, HI 96822 USA

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## ABSTRACT

Conflict has surrounded Hawai'i's commercial marine aquarium fishery since its inception in the late 1940s. In 2019, the Hawai'i Supreme Court requested that an environmental impact statement (EIS) analysing the ecological and cultural impacts of Hawai'i's marine aquarium fishery be completed for Hawai'i Island (Big Island) and O'ahu. The costs and benefits associated with the fishery and their distribution across stakeholder groups was however not addressed in the EIS. This paper presents a cost-benefit based analysis of four policy scenarios using existing secondary data for Hawai'i's marine aquarium fishery. From the analysis, a state-wide collection ban was the option that yielded positive annual net benefits and negatively impacted the fewest stakeholders. In contrast, the EIS recommends ten permits for fishing off the coast of Big Island be issued.

## 1. Introduction

Some view the marine aquarium fish trade as a path to expanding the conservation of reef environments based on the assumption that owning aquarium fishes cultivates awareness and interest in the conservation of their source habitats [46,6,31,47]. While conservation groups have promoted the aquarium trade as a means of enhancing livelihoods in developing countries, others are concerned that the profit motive of commercial fishers serves as an incentive to overharvest species commonly found in marine aquariums [37,39,59]. If marine aquarium fisheries are not properly regulated and the regulations are not promulgated, a common-pool resource dilemma will result in economic profitability prevailing over long-term sustainability – a tragedy of the commons scenario [43].

Hawai'i's commercial marine aquarium fishery has been a source of debate among various stakeholder groups including aquarium fishers and hobbyists, marine scientists, Native Hawaiians (Kānaka Maoli), resource managers, policy makers and community members [2,36,46]. The fishery's costs and benefits are distributed differently among these stakeholders, resulting in years of conflict. As has been observed in many fisheries around the world, fishers in Hawai'i under report their catches and mortality rates [23,48,52,56], which further exacerbates conflicts. The fishery is comprised of two geographically distinct zones. The first is the West Hawai'i Regional Fishery Management Area (WHRFMA) that extends the length of the west coast of Hawai'i Island (Big Island) from

Ka Lae, Ka'u<sup>–</sup> (South Point) to 'Upolu Point. The second encompasses North Kohala, and the main Hawaiian Islands excluding all zones that are designated as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) [57].

Residents and Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners have pushed to ban aquarium fishing in Hawai'i citing the lack of sustainable and humane harvesting methods, inadequate enforcement, inaccurate catch reporting and poor alignment with Kānaka Maoli ideals of resource management [23]. In 2017, the Hawai'i Supreme Court placed a moratorium on aquarium fishery permits, citing a need for a Hawai'i Environmental Policy Act (HEPA) review [15–17]. The court concluded that the permitted use of fine mesh nets involves the public's use of state land and therefore requires discretionary approval from the state [15–17]. The court's request in 2019 for an environmental impact statement (EIS) analysing the ecological and cultural impacts of the marine aquarium fishery came after Environmental Assessments (EA) for Big Island and O'ahu were submitted by the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) and deemed insufficient by the State's Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) Chair Suzanne D. Case [15–17]. The final environmental impact statement (EIS) funded by PIJAC and conducted by a consulting firm, which concluded that DLNR should issue permits to ten commercial aquarium fishers in the WHRFMA, was unanimously rejected by the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) after concluding that the EIS did not adequately disclose the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action [14]. PIJAC appealed BLNR's decision to the Environmental Council who affirmed BLNR's rejection of

<sup>\*</sup> Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [Schaar@hawaii.edu](mailto:Schaar@hawaii.edu) (S.I. Schaar), [Lcox@hawaii.edu](mailto:Lcox@hawaii.edu) (L.J. Cox).

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**Table 1**  
Description of policy scenarios analysed in CBA.

Scenario	Characteristics
A. Status quo (2019)	AQ Permits void and fishery continues without use of fine mesh nets on O'ahu, Big Island and no collecting in WHRFMA Voluntary catch report data Majority of catch is exported Unknown impacts to other fisheries, the environment, cultural resources and on-reef tourism State funds monitoring and management of fishery Potential for non-compliance Provides industry income Provides tax and fee revenue to state
B. Permitting system (2016)	Administrative rules and bag limits apply across the State Voluntary catch report data Majority of catch is exported Unknown impacts to other fisheries, the environment, cultural resources and on-reef tourism State funds monitoring and management of fishery Potential for non-compliance Provides industry income Provides tax and fee revenue to state
C. State-wide collecting ban	No aquarium species from Hawai'i state waters can be collected Collection exemptions possible for research, educational institutions and managers Wild-captured aquarium exports banned No impacts on other fisheries, the environment, cultural resources or on-reef tourism State avoids costs associated with managing the fishery Potential for non-compliance Loss of industry income Loss of tax and fees revenues to state
D. Captive breeding collection	Permits issued to fishers with facilities for captive breeding Opportunity to export from Hawai'i Unknown impacts on other fisheries, cultural resources, the environment and on-reef tourism State funds monitoring and management of fishery Potential for non-compliance Provides income opportunity for industry Provides tax and fee revenue to state

the EIS [27].

The 2019 state-wide moratorium allows commercial aquarium fishing to continue without commercial aquarium permits, as long as fine-mesh net equipment is not used and fishers possess a commercial marine license (CML), whereas, all collection has been outlawed regardless of gear-type for the WHRFMA [20]. A November 2020 order from Hawai'i's First Circuit Court requires environmental review for issuance of new or renewed annual CMLs to be used for aquarium fishing purposes, allowing aquarium collecting by CML holders to continue until their CML expire one year after issuance [18,21]. A January 2021 order from the same court further strengthened the November 2020 order by issuing an injunction to halt aquarium collection under existing CMLs, completely banning commercial aquarium fishing in the State of Hawai'i pending environmental review by the industry [13].

Many U. S. government agencies use cost benefit analysis (CBA) in addition to or in place of environmental impact assessment to assist in management decision-making. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [54] concluded that cost benefit analyses used to determine environmental regulations increased net benefits to society and "provide the balance required in complex regulatory decisions." International non-profit organizations also rely on CBAs in managing natural resources. Verdone [55] used CBA to analyse landscape forest restoration in Rwanda for the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

This paper presents a cost benefit (CBA) based analysis using published information and existing data to provide evidence to assist decision makers considering the future of this fishery. Four policy scenarios were developed, the relevant costs and benefits for each scenario are described and/or estimated and their distribution across stakeholder groups are assessed. The CBA results are compared to the EIS recommendations and conclusions in order to determine how the two differ and which one provides a more accurate appraisal of maintaining the aquarium fishery.

## 2. Methods

Four past, current or proposed scenarios for managing this fishery are described (Table 1) in order to identify the associated costs and benefits, along with stakeholders impacted. Scenarios A and B assume that the aquarium fishery continues, though the number of fishers in the industry is not mandated in either one. Scenario A involves maintaining the 2019 status quo that restricts the use of fine mesh nets and no collecting in the WHRFMA. Scenario B assumes that the 2016 bag limits would be applied across the State. These were considered here because they both attempt to limit the catch. Scenario C involves a state-wide ban, which has been suggested by many stakeholders who do not benefit from the fishery. Scenario D allows the fishery to continue only to facilitate the establishment of captive breeding operations. This option is considered as one that protects wild fish in the long run, while also encouraging an industry that cultivates awareness and interest in the conservation of their source habitats by producing aquarium fish. The environmental impact statement (EIS) funded by PIJAC recommends limiting the number of permits, rather than limiting the catch.

The stakeholder groups who were identified in each scenario are described (Table 2) and the acronym used for the group throughout the

**Table 2**  
Codes and descriptions for stakeholder groups.

Code	Stakeholder Group Description
S1	Native Hawaiians
S2	Residents of Hawai'i
S3	Tourists
S4	Collectors and wholesalers from O'ahu
S5	Collectors and wholesalers from Hawai'i Island excluding the WHRFMA
S6	Collectors and wholesalers from the WHRFMA
S7	All collectors and wholesaler in the State
S8	State government agencies

paper is identified. Previous research [2,23,36,46], various media reports, hearings and litigation surrounding the ongoing conflict in this fishery provided details about the stakeholder groups. A description of the methods used to estimate or describe each cost/benefit and their expected sign follow. While CBA normally involves discounting to ensure that net present value of costs and benefits are calculated, annual point estimates are used in this CBA. Since the estimates do not vary over time, discounting adds nothing to the analysis.

## 2.1. Cost and benefit estimates and descriptions

### 2.1.1. State management costs

Since both Scenarios A and B involve limiting the industry's catch and require voluntary reporting, the State will have to enforce these regulations. Therefore, to estimate this cost, DAR personnel in DLNR were contacted and asked to estimate DAR's 2019 management cost for Hawai'i's marine aquarium fishery including salaries of employees who work directly with the fishery, aquarium fish surveys and any other costs associated with the fishery that DAR funds. DAR officials provided a low estimate of USD 300,000 annually covering the time spent by 20 or more individuals in the aquarium fishery along with their supplies and equipment. Their high estimate of USD 500,000 annually includes costs, such as fringe benefits that are not included DAR's annual 2019 budget, but are found in DLNR's overall budget. For Scenario C, these management costs should be eliminated overtime. Scenario D would likely involve management costs, which could be reduced as the policies and regulations that support this scenario are refined.

### 2.1.2. Tourism value

According to the Hawai'i Tourism Authority [29], the State's economy relied on tourism for its largest source of private capital. Spalding et al. [50], estimated the "on-reef" tourism value for the entire state of Hawai'i at USD 550.8 million per year. Spalding was contacted and estimated, using the existing data base the annual "on-reef" values for O'ahu and Hawai'i Island to be approximately USD 442,496,000 and USD 16,921,000 respectively, for an annual upper bound of USD 459,417,000. This was inflated to 2019 USD for a total annual value of USD 478,891,356.77. Cesar and Beukering [7] estimated the value of tourism to be USD 304 million and inflating this value to 2019 USD yields a low estimate of approximately USD 442.1 million.

This estimated tourism value between USD 478,891,356.77 and 442,100,000 USD represents the direct and indirect market value of on-reef tourism to the State in 2019. Maintaining this value over time is partially contingent on maintaining the health and beauty of Hawai'i's reefs. The aquarium fishery may reduce this over time as fish are removed from the reefs in Scenarios A and B because the limits are not calculated based on the productivity of the fishery and are difficult to enforce. Evidence also suggests that catches are underreported. Therefore, if the fishery continues, overharvesting of this public resource will likely occur and as a result, the value of tourism will decrease. Uncertainty exists as to how quickly this decline will occur. Researchers predict that unmitigated bleaching events could lead to the loss of shallow coral cover in Hawai'i by the year 2050 [35], which indicates that a 30 year time frame could be considered in making marine resource management decisions and would result in an extremely large total cost of continuing this aquarium fishery by 2050.

### 2.1.3. Industry income

In order to determine the market value of the aquarium fishery in Hawai'i, the methods used by Dierking [22] were updated with recent data to conservatively estimate 2019 gross revenue for the industry. Unpublished 2019 catch report summary information, unpublished 2019 dealer purchase information, unpublished 2019 individual catch reports, and unpublished permit lists from 2015 to 2018 were obtained from DAR. The 2019 price and cost information from dealer websites, retail price lists on websites, and industry structure information

provided the data used for the estimation. The lower bound for total revenue accruing to fishers was calculated by multiplying the "diver price" for each species by the number sold to estimate annual revenue of USD 1,676,982 in 2019.

Wholesale revenue could not be estimated due to the lack of price information among local fishers who are also wholesalers. In order to estimate the upper bounds, the 2016 catch report data for "number sold" was used with retail prices on the website of a Hawai'i based fisher retailing fish. The "number sold" on the 2016 catch report for each of 12 species was multiplied by the 2019 retail price listed by the primary collector/retailer. The total revenue across all the species represents the upper bounds of USD 8,343,896, which includes the value of the fish after they were exported.

### 2.1.4. License fees

The State does collect license fees for the aquarium fishery. Commercial aquarium permits are USD 50 and recreational aquarium permits have no cost [20]. Commercial aquarium collectors must also purchase USD 100 commercial marine fishing licenses annually from DAR. Scenario A, which represents the status quo in 2019 only accounts for the cost of the commercial marine fishing license since all commercial aquarium permits are void. Scenario D assumes that a permit is required to collect for captive breeding. This scenario explores an option that would raise the permit cost to USD 500 and cap the number of permits issued at 100 state-wide.

### 2.1.5. Export values

The industry values also include the value of fish exported, which were investigated to determine how much of this value accrues to the State. Catch reports for 2016 are the most recent, complete annual data set and thus are used to estimate exports. Twelve species commonly targeted in Hawai'i's marine aquarium fishery (Table a1, appendix) were included. The data for six out of the twelve species discussed in this study (*Naso lituratus*, *Forcipiger flavissimus*, *Chaetodon multicinctus*, *Zanclus cornutus*, *Centropyge potteri*, *Coris gaimard*) indicated that the fish sales on initial catch reports by licensed fishers was lower than numbers of fish reportedly purchased by licensed dealers from licensed fishers on dealer sales and export reports. This suggests that a percentage of the catch was not reported on catch reports or was sold to dealers by fishers who do not report their catch to the state.

Dierking [22], reported that roughly 95% of the aquarium fish caught from the West Hawai'i fishery were exported. Two criteria were used to identify retailers from which price information was obtained. The first criteria requires that the species' primary and sole collection origin had to be Hawai'i, and the second requires the species be one of the 12 species described in this study, not including captive bred fish. Retail prices for 2019 were collected from 11 online aquaria retailers with 10 on mainland U.S.A. and one from Hawai'i. Species name, price, retailer name, city of operation and website information were used to generate an average out-of-state retail price for each of the 12 species and were compared to online retail prices offered by the local aquarium fishers/retailer. Retail price differences were 1.5–5.1 times higher in mainland markets compared to the local market.

The profits made on the mainland and the taxes on the value added accrues to the area in which the fish is retailed. Since these profits and taxes occur from the sale of a Hawai'i public resource, a negative impact occurs in comparison to keeping the fish in the reef to ensure that the State's tourism sector and/or residents continue to benefit from these fish. This is consistent with a 2019 decision by the Hawai'i Supreme Court that "all public natural resources are held in trust by the State for the common benefit of Hawai'i's people and the generations to come" ([8], p. 1150).

### 2.1.6. Environmental costs

Hawai'i's marine aquarium fishery almost exclusively targets herbivores and corallivores. The development of a State Coral Bleaching

**Table 3**  
Cost and benefits associated with each scenario.

Scenario	Impacted Stakeholder Groups	Annual Estimates (USD)	
		Low	High
<b>A. Status Quo (2019)</b>			
- State management costs	S8	-300,000.00	-500,000.00
- Tourism value	S2, S3, S8	-442,105,806.46	-478,891,356.77
+ Industry income	S4, S5	1,784,936.43	8,343,896.00
+ License fees	S8	17,400.00	17,400.00
Total valued net benefit		-440,603,470.03	-471,030,060.77
Costs/benefits not valued			
- Losses from exports	S2, S8		
- Environmental costs	S1, S2, S3, S7, S8		
- Social costs	S1, S2, S8		
- Other fisheries' indirect costs	S1, S2, S7, S8		
- Captive breeding costs	S4, S5		
<b>B. Permitting System (2016)</b>			
- State management costs	S8	-300,000.00	-500,000.00
- Tourism value	S2, S3, S8	-442,105,806.46	-478,891,356.77
+ Industry income	S7	1,784,936.43	8,343,896.00
+ License fees	S8	26,100.00	26,100.00
Total valued net benefit		-440,594,770.03	-471,021,360.77
Costs/benefits not valued			
- Losses from exports	S2, S8		
- Environmental costs	S1, S2, S3, S7, S8		
- Social costs	S1, S2, S8		
- Other fisheries' indirect costs	S1, S2, S7, S8		
- Captive breeding costs	S7		
<b>C. Statewide AQ Collection Ban</b>			
+ Tourism value	S2, S3, S8	442,105,806.46	478,891,356.77
- Industry income	S7	-1,784,936.43	-8,343,896.00
- License fees	S8	-26,100.00	-26,100.00
Total valued net benefit		440,294,770.03	470,521,360.77
Costs/benefits not valued			
+ Environmental costs	S1, S2, S3, S7, S8		
+ Social costs	S1, S2, S7, S8		
+ Other fisheries' Indirect costs	S1, S2, S8		
<b>D. Captive Breeding Collection</b>			
- State management costs	S8	-300,000.00	-500,000.00
- Tourism value	S2, S3, S8	-442,105,806.45	-478,891,356.77
+ Industry income	S7	1,784,936.43	8,343,896.00
+ License fees	S8	50,000.00	50,000.00
Total valued net benefit		-440,570,870.03	-470,997,460.77
Costs/benefits not valued			
- Losses from exports	S2, S8		
- Environmental costs	S1, S2, S3, S7, S8		
- Social costs	S1, S2, S7, S8		
- Other fisheries' indirect costs	S1, S2, S8		
- Captive breeding costs	S7		

Recovery Plan, in collaboration with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), DLNR, and DAR concluded that the establishment of a combination of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Herbivore Fishery Management Areas (HFMA) across the main Hawaiian Islands ranked among the most preferred actions to address the State's coral reef recovery from climate change induced bleaching events [19]. The State's decision to employ spatial herbivore management, highlights the importance of herbivores as a critical tool for reef recovery and resiliency, thus increasing their value and importance in Hawai'i's coral reef ecosystems.

Past studies have indicated that climate change impacts coupled with local, human-induced stressors can retard coral reef resilience, resulting in regime shifts from coral to algal turf dominated systems if left unchecked [1,8,9,26,30]. Herbivores have been found to play critical roles in resisting these regime shifts [26]. While the long-term impact of the aquarium fishery on herbivore management is uncertain, the potential exists for the fishery to prevent the State from realizing its reef recovery goals.

### 2.1.7. Social costs

A 2017 survey of Hawai'i residents concluded that 90% of respondents support further regulation of Hawai'i's marine aquarium fishery, and that 83% of respondents support ending the trade altogether [4]. From the fishers' perspective, Stevenson et al. [51] found that 20.7% of all fishers disliked the bureaucracy and 17.2% disliked the poor reputation of the West Hawai'i aquarium fishery.

No secondary information about the overall social impacts is available. However, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council [44] did summarize several interviews in a Cultural Impact Statement found in Appendix A that describes the contentious nature of the fishery and its lack of alignment with Native Hawaiian values and fishing/management views/traditions [44].

While the impact of the fishery on the long-term social well-being of State's residents is uncertain, the majority appears to conclude that continuing to operate this fishery reduces their social well-being.

### 2.1.8. Indirect costs for other fisheries

While some studies have indicated that fish populations have increased in open areas and Fish Replenishment Areas (FRAs) where no aquarium collecting occurs, other studies have argued that many marine aquarium fish stocks in Hawai'i are still relatively data poor [41]. The Hawai'i Supreme Court has adopted a precautionary principle associated with the public trust with a ruling concluding that "where (scientific) uncertainty exists, a trustee's duty to protect the resource mitigates in favour of choosing presumptions that also protect the resource" ([32], p. 466)).

Overfishing is the primary driver of reef fish declines across the main Hawaiian Islands and the populations of food-fish species that overlap with some commonly collected aquarium species are particularly affected [24]. Specific concern regarding the sustained abundance of some commonly targeted food-fish species in the West Hawai'i aquarium fishery exists due to some species exhibiting declining populations [57]. Concern regarding the aquarium fishery's impact on the commercial and recreational nearshore reef fisheries has arisen due to overlap in target species [46,57]. This concern supports the conclusion that the aquarium fishery is likely to have negative impacts on other fisheries in the long-run.

### 2.1.9. Captive breeding costs

Scenario D involves allowing the aquarium fishery to continue in order to support captive breeding efforts. In order for this scenario not to have negative impacts on Hawai'i reefs, a detailed policy and supporting regulations would be required. Descriptions of the costs paid by wholesalers and collectors by Dierking [22] can be used to infer the cost categories associated with local collection and wholesale business operations. Captive breeding and husbandry would result in similar costs

**Table 4**

A comparison of procedures and recommendations for the CBA to those for the 2020 Hawai'i Island EIS.

Cost Benefit Analysis	Big Island 2020 EIS <sup>a</sup>
Explores four policy alternatives, including a ban. Provided evidence-based recommendations based on impact estimates, descriptions, and the distribution of them among stakeholder groups. Recommends a statewide ban on the collection and export of marine aquaria. Suggests that captive breeding collection might hold potential if properly managed. Completed as a student project using existing secondary data and not funded by any industry, government agency or non-profit organization.	Rejected considering a ban since it did not meet PIJAC's purpose. Considered three scenarios that involved no permit limits and one with a permit limit. Provided a recommendation based on direct market benefits of the industry. Recommends reducing the number of permits to ten across the State.  Funded by the PIJAC.

<sup>a</sup> [44]

as wild collection, along with some additional costs to accommodate more technologically advanced equipment required to stimulate spawning [40,58].

Marine ornamental species can be categorized as demersal spawners or pelagic spawners. Most demersal spawners produce clutches of eggs in nests or on substrates and tend to form strong breeding pairs, often displaying parental care which makes them the preferred choice for captive breeding aquarists [40]. The specialized knowledge and equipment required for rearing marine aquarium fish that are pelagic spawners will make them more expensive to produce compared to wild collection [49]. This increase in costs would primarily impact those that purchase these captive bred fish. Currently, nearly all of these people live outside of the State and therefore likely have no particular interest in protecting the public resources of residents. Rhyné [49] also argues that promoting access to breeding information could result in more successful ornamental rearing and help conserve populations of wild aquarium fish.

### 3. Results and discussion

The results indicate that Scenario C, a state-wide ban on aquarium collecting, is the only scenario that produced positive net benefits (Table 3). Because point estimates in 2019 USD were the only quantitative data presented here, this conclusion is based on one annual estimate of costs and benefits. The stakeholder groups negatively impacted by a state-wide ban include a small group of local fishers, wholesalers, and dealers that comprise Hawai'i industry while benefits accrue to larger populations of stakeholders.

The status quo policy in Scenario A would allow collection to continue with methods other than fine-mesh nets. In the WHRFMA, where all permits are now void, poaching has been observed, resulting in vessel, aquarium gear and fish take seizures [5]. Thus, monitoring costs may increase if this scenario occurs. Scenario B, which represents what took place in 2016 does not put a cap on the issuance of permits, though it does provide for the collection of fees by the State. Overall, market benefits would still accrue only to aquarium collectors and wholesalers, though the distribution of net benefits between these industry members varies between Scenarios A and B because Scenario A excludes fishers in the WHRFMA.

Scenario D allows collection for captive breeding with a permit similar to DAR's Special Activity Permit system which allows research, education or management institutions to collect marine organisms with specific gear restriction exemptions [18,21]. However, all existing permit holders can claim to be engaged in breeding. Further research may be needed to identify potential regulatory and enforcement solutions for Scenario D. Fishers could be required to prove their capacity to captive breed species and stricter live-fish export regulations could be developed. While this would increase costs, the potential indirect and non-market benefits associated with not removing fish from the reefs in the long-run would also increase and provide the positive benefits associated with consumers having access to aquarium fish. Miltz et al. [38] found that 90.5% of consumer respondents were willing to pay more for fishes that were certified as harvested in an environmentally

sustainable way. This type of certification could be considered for captive bred fish to create a mechanism that convinces the customers to absorb some of the costs associated with switching to a sustainable practice [38]. In addition, captive breeding facilities could become attractions for residents and visitors. If captive breeding attractions included educational content designed to inform people about protecting fish and the surrounding reefs, the carrying capacity of Hawai'i's near shore ecosystems may increase.

A comparison of this CBA with the PIJAC funded EIS found that the procedures and overall recommendations were significantly different (Table 4). Both the CBA and the EIS relied on existing data to complete the analysis and the market benefits of the industry estimated by the CBA and the EIS are similar. The EIS did not consider a ban because it did not meet PIJAC's purpose to continue fishers' livelihoods [44]. The EIS considered three scenarios that involved unlimited permits and one that limited permits on the Big Island to ten. The costs for Native Hawaiians and other stakeholder groups of continuing to operate the fishery were considered negligible and no justification is provided as to why this decision was made [44]. No recommendations on compliance enforcement relative to the proposed bag limits or oversight to prevent poaching were included. No caveat was included that oversight and enforcement expenses might increase if permits were limited [44]. One individual who was allegedly named as one of the proposed permit holders [45] was also cited in a February 2020 poaching incident (R. Umberger, personal communication; [5]) which indicates the need for such a caveat. Overall the EIS puts forth a recommendation that supports the industry.

Because Hawai'i's Supreme Court reaffirmed that all public resource are to benefit Hawai'i's people [32] and that private or commercial use should receive a "high" level of scrutiny, the size of the stakeholder groups is also of interest. The resident population, including Native Hawaiians, was 1,415,872 in 2019 [53] and Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council [44] indicates that their preferred plan would directly benefit ten resident fishers with permits and their employees. Visitors, which numbered 10,424,995 in 2019 [28], will also likely pay a cost if marine aquarium fish are removed from the State's reefs. Tourists can also decide to travel elsewhere should the reefs become degraded, which will result in significant market costs for Hawai'i in the long-term.

### 4. Conclusion and recommendations

The analysis presented here determined that a state-wide ban on collection is likely to produce impacts of positive annual net benefits. The EIS funded by PIJAC recommended that collection permits be limited to ensure that the fishery remains in existence. Relying on EIS recommendations that aim to support one group of stakeholders at the expense of others to determine policy could be considered biased. CBA is used globally for evidence-based decision-making.

When considering the "sustainability" of any system, distributional and equity issues over a long-time frame must be considered [10]. The CBA presented in this paper explores these distributional issues that this fishery poses to a variety of stakeholder groups and the environment using the available evidence. While modern economic systems often

focus on gross domestic product to track economic progress and guide policy, tracking environmental and social indicators has been identified as important to ensure sustainability in certain economic sectors specific to Hawai'i [42].

Other fisheries, which pose similar environmental problems [3,11,12,25,33,34], should consider employing CBA in order to inform decision-making. Relying on an EIS funded by an industry stakeholder group is likely to produce a document aimed at justifying the position of the funder. Stakeholders that receive cultural ecosystem services from resources that are also being harvested for market benefits often include relatively large populations of disadvantaged minorities and indigenous populations. Businesses interested in protecting their market benefits likely have an advantage if an EIS is the only source of management recommendations. Sustainable management requires that the costs and benefits accruing to all stakeholder groups be investigated to ensure that policies are equitable.

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### CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Siena Schaar:** Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing - original draft. **Linda J. Cox:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Writing - review & editing.

### Declaration of Competing Interest

none.

### Data availability

The majority of data used for this research came from secondary sources. Relevant pricing data was collected from public websites and catch data was retrieved by UIPA from the Hawai'i Department of Aquatic Resources (DAR).

### Appendix

See Tables A.1–A.3.

**Table A.1**

The 12 common marine aquarium species included in this report.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Hawaiian Name
Yellow Tang <sup>b</sup>	<i>Zebrasoma flavescens</i>	Lau'ipala, Lau'i pala, or Lā'i pala)
Goldring Surgeonfish <sup>a</sup>	<i>Ctenochaetus strigosus</i>	Kole
Achilles Tang <sup>b</sup>	<i>Acanthurus achilles</i>	Paku'iku'i
Orangespine Unicornfish <sup>b</sup>	<i>Naso lituratus</i>	Umaumalei, Kala, Ume, Mahaha, Pakala, Pakalakala or 'Ohua
Chevron Tang <sup>b</sup>	<i>Ctenochaetus hawaiiensis</i>	n/a
Longnose Butterflyfish, (Forcefish) <sup>b</sup>	<i>Forcipiger flavissimus</i>	Lau wiliwili nukunuku 'oi'oi
Multiband (Pebbled) Butterflyfish <sup>a</sup>	<i>Chaetodon multicinctus</i>	Kikākapu, Kapuhili
Fourspot Butterflyfish <sup>b</sup>	<i>Chaetodon quadrimaculatus</i>	Lauhau
Tinker's Butterflyfish <sup>b</sup>	<i>Chaetodon tinkeri</i>	n/a
Moorish Idol <sup>b</sup>	<i>Zanclus cornutus</i>	Kihikihi
Potter's Angelfish <sup>a</sup>	<i>Centropyge potteri</i>	n/a
Yellowtail Coris Wrasse <sup>b</sup>	<i>Coris gaimard</i>	Hinalea 'akilolo

<sup>a</sup> Indicates endemic species

<sup>b</sup> Indicates native species

**Table A.2**

Average retail prices (U.S Mainland) compared to average retail price (local collector/seller) of 12 common aquarium species, and price difference (%).

Common Name	Scientific Name	Avg. Retail Price (U.S Mainland) n = 10	Avg. Retail Price (Local collector/seller) n = 1	Mark-up (%)
Yellow Tang	<i>Zebrasoma flavescens</i>	\$74.41	\$16.00	465.1
Goldring Surgeonfish	<i>Ctenochaetus strigosus</i>	\$71.88	\$14.00	513.4
Achilles Tang	<i>Acanthurus achilles</i>	\$392.32	\$150.00	261.5
Orangespine Unicornfish	<i>Naso lituratus</i>	\$152.71	\$37.50	407.2
Chevron Tang	<i>Ctenochaetus hawaiiensis</i>	\$233.11	\$150.00	155.4
Longnose Butterflyfish	<i>Forcipiger flavissimus</i>	\$46.00	\$15.00	306.6
Multiband Pebbled Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon multicinctus</i>	\$35.37	\$10.00	353.7
Fourspot Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon quadrimaculatus</i>	\$78.99	\$40.00	197.5
Tinker's Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon tinkeri</i>	\$699.99	\$350.00	200.0
Moorish Idol	<i>Zanclus cornutus</i>	\$49.98	\$10.00	499.8
Potter's Angelfish	<i>Centropyge potteri</i>	\$108.06	\$30.00	360.2
Yellowtail Coris	<i>Coris gaimard</i>	n/a	\$30.00	n/a

**Table A.3**

Comparison of specimens reported sold on licensed aquarium collectors' detailed catch reports (2016) versus specimens reported bought from licensed fishers by licensed dealers, on licensed aquarium dealers' personal sales and export reports (2016).

Common Name	Scientific Name	No. Sold (AQ detailed catch report)	No. Bought (AQ dealer pers. Sale/export report)	% (no. bought/ no. sold)
Yellow Tang	<i>Zebrasoma flavescens</i>	322,651	284,784	88.26
Goldring Surgeonfish	<i>Ctenochaetus strigosus</i>	45,765	44,106	96.37
Achilles Tang	<i>Acanthurus achilles</i>	6787	5758	84.84
Orangespine Unicornfish <sup>a</sup>	<i>Naso lituratus</i>	9966	10,338	103.73
Chevron Tang	<i>Ctenochaetus hawaiiensis</i>	5126 (B.I only)	4135	80.67
Longnose Butterflyfish <sup>a</sup>	<i>Forcipiger flavissimus</i>	1329	1507	113.39
Multiband Pebbled Butterflyfish <sup>a</sup>	<i>Chaetodon multicinctus</i>	314	666	212.10
Fourspot Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon quadrimaculatus</i>	480	448	93.33
Tinker's Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon tinkeri</i>	293 (B.I only)	218	74.40
Moorish Idol <sup>a</sup>	<i>Zanclus cornutus</i>	805 (B.I only)	970	120.50
Potter's Angelfish <sup>a</sup>	<i>Centropyge potteri</i>	6708	8726	130.08
Yellowtail Coris Wrasse <sup>a</sup>	<i>Coris gaimard</i>	866	993	114.67

(B.I only) indicates collection and reporting on detailed catch report only from Hawai'i island

<sup>a</sup> Indicates sales or export reporting over 100% of what was reported on initial detailed catch report.

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February 10, 2026

TO: Senate Committees on Water & Land and Hawaiian Affairs

**RE: STRONG SUPPORT for SB2996 – Relating to Environmental Protection**

Aloha Chairs Lee and Richards and Committee Members,

We are Native Hawaiian, environmental, marine, and animal-protection organizations and businesses writing in **strong support of SB2996**, which would permanently prohibit the commercial capture of Hawai'i's marine life for the aquarium pet trade, while preserving exemptions for public aquariums, research, education, and aquaculture.

We sincerely thank the Committee for considering this critically important measure, which affects Hawai'i's reefs, cultural practices, local communities, and the public trust resources held for present and future generations.

For decades local communities and residents across Hawai'i have sought to end the destructive aquarium pet trade that has taken millions of important marine animals, primarily herbivores, from our reefs, for sale to pet stores and private aquariums outside Hawai'i. Mortality throughout the supply chain is well documented and would never be tolerated for other animals sold as pets.

**Public opposition to the aquarium trade has been overwhelming and consistent for decades.** Polling has shown that approximately **84% of Hawai'i residents support ending aquarium collecting for the pet trade**, due to well-documented environmental, cultural, and ethical concerns and conflicts with local values.

**This measure is urgently needed because:**

- **Herbivorous fishes are essential to reef resilience**, particularly as Hawai'i's reefs face escalating climate stress. Beginning in 2014, unprecedented marine heat waves caused widespread coral loss, and scientists project **annual heat-stress events by as early as 2030**. Scientific consensus indicates that **up to 70% of Hawai'i's reefs could be lost by mid-century** without strong local protections, including increased herbivore abundance and biomass to control algal overgrowth.
- **Food fishers and subsistence communities are paying the price** for decades of aquarium collecting. The aquarium trade historically removed **1.8 times more fish from West Hawai'i reefs than all food fishers combined**, primarily herbivores (DLNR 2020 Report to the Legislature). The recent prohibition on take of paku'iku'i (Achilles tang) followed years of DLNR reporting that aquarium collecting was a major driver of population decline.
- **On O'ahu, the most heavily targeted aquarium species—again, largely herbivores—have been depleted by approximately 90% on average** due to aquarium collecting (Grabowsky & Thornhill 2020).

**What DAR's own data now show:**

- **Contrary to earlier assumptions, yellow tang populations have not recovered as biologically or historically expected** following the court-ordered cessation of aquarium collecting in late 2017. A recent independent expert analysis of DAR’s long-term monitoring data found that recovery patterns observed after earlier closures have **not re-occurred**, raising serious concerns about reef resilience and management assumptions.

- **At the same time, DAR has sharply reduced reef fish monitoring effort.** After more than 20 years of statistically robust monitoring using 4–6 survey rounds annually in West Hawai‘i, survey effort was reduced to **a single round per year beginning in 2022**, significantly weakening the State’s ability to detect trends, evaluate recovery, or responsibly manage renewed extraction.

- **This loss of monitoring power comes precisely as DLNR seeks to reopen commercial aquarium collection**, leaving the State effectively blind to the status of reef fish populations already depleted by decades of take.

**Additional benefits of SB2996 include:**

- **Saving taxpayer money.** DLNR has estimated that administering the aquarium trade costs the State **hundreds of thousands of dollars annually**, excluding enforcement, while generating only minimal permit revenue. Ending the trade would eliminate these ongoing public costs.

- **Clear economic benefits to Hawai‘i residents.** A peer-reviewed cost-benefit analysis found that ending the aquarium trade yields **net positive economic benefits**, supporting over **\$440 million annually** in direct and indirect reef-related tourism value.

- **Supporting truly sustainable alternatives.** The only sustainable aquarium trade is one based on aquaculture. Thanks to advances by Hawai‘i researchers and businesses, including the Oceanic Institute and Biota, popular species such as yellow tang are now **captive-bred and commercially available** without harming wild reef populations.

**Conclusion**

SB2996 represents a responsible, science-based, and culturally grounded solution that aligns with public opinion, protects reef ecosystems under increasing climate stress, and fulfills the State’s constitutional public-trust obligations.

We respectfully urge the Committee to **pass SB2996** and ensure Hawai‘i’s reefs and reef wildlife are protected for generations to come.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support.

Sincerely,

The ‘A‘ole AQ Hui:

For the Fishes, Moana Ohana, Kalanihale, The Center for Biodiversity, Kai Palaoa, Sierra Club of Hawai'i, Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition, Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, Hawaiian Humane Society, Friends of Hanauma Bay, Conservation Council for Hawaii, Fair Wind Cruises, Surftrider Foundation | Hawai'i Region, Keiko Conservation, Legacy Reef Foundation, Haereticus Environmental Laboratory, Ocean Defenders Alliance | Hawai'i, Oceanic Preservation Society

## Aquarium Collecting and the Failure of Reef Fish Recovery in Hawai'i

Independent state and federal monitoring data show that yellow tang populations in Hawai'i failed to recover—and in some cases declined—after aquarium collecting ceased, contradicting sustainability claims, population doubling theory, and Hawai'i's own historical recovery experience.

### Why These Findings Matter for Aquarium Trade Legislation

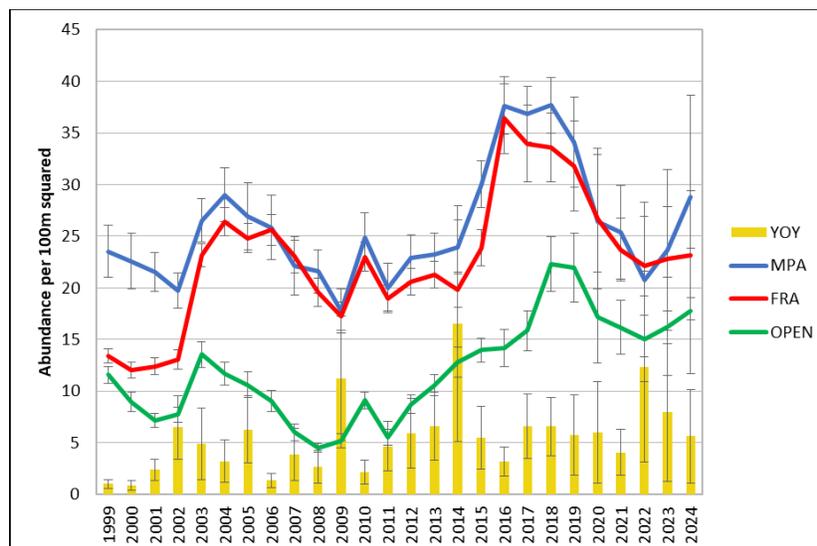
Claims that aquarium collecting can be conducted sustainably have been advanced by the aquarium trade and relied upon in environmental reviews, agency rulemaking, and management justifications for continued or renewed aquarium collecting. While sustainability is frequently asserted, it is rarely defined with specificity or tied to empirically testable recovery benchmarks. For yellow tang—the most heavily targeted aquarium species in Hawai'i—long-term monitoring data allow these sustainability claims to be evaluated directly. The results demonstrate that recovery cannot be presumed and that continued authorization of aquarium collecting poses substantial biological and management risks. To date, policymakers have not required a clear definition of sustainability or objective recovery criteria against which these claims can be evaluated.

If aquarium collecting were truly sustainable, the cessation of harvest would have resulted in timely and sustained population recovery; instead, monitoring data show post-closure stagnation or decline rather than recovery.

### What Happened After Aquarium Collecting Stopped

#### West Hawai'i (State and Federal Monitoring)

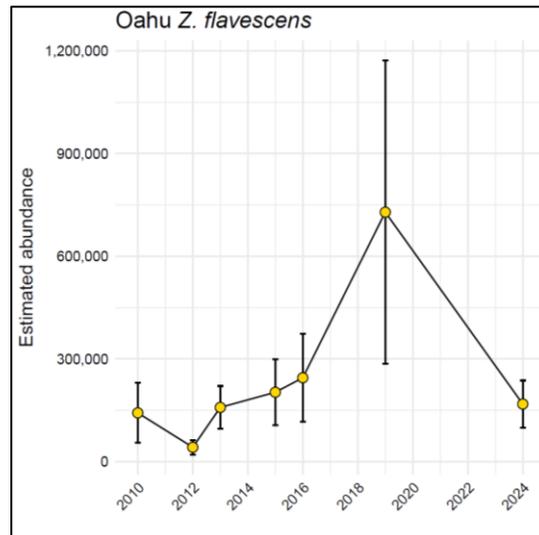
- Commercial aquarium collecting was halted by court order in 2017 in previously open areas of the West Hawai'i Regional Fishery Management Area (WHRFMA).
- Based on population doubling time theory and prior recovery following protection, yellow tang populations were expected to approximately double by 2021.
- Although abundance increased briefly in 2018, this increase was not sustained, and by 2021, yellow tang abundance in formerly collected areas had declined back to levels comparable to those observed during active collection.
- No population doubling has occurred through 2024 based on both Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) and NOAA monitoring data.
- **Historical precedent:** Yellow tang populations in West Hawai'i doubled within ~4 years after protection in 1999, a recovery not observed following the 2017 closure.



**Figure 1. West Hawai'i yellow tang abundance by management area (DAR monitoring).** Abundance in formerly collected (OPEN) areas briefly increased after the 2017 closure but subsequently declined, reverting by 2021 to levels similar to those observed during active collection.

## O‘ahu (Federal Monitoring)

- Aquarium collecting on O‘ahu was halted in 2020 following a second court order, after a longer period of intense harvest pressure than in West Hawai‘i.
- Using West Hawai‘i as an empirical benchmark, population doubling would have been expected by approximately 2024.
- NOAA monitoring data instead show that yellow tang abundance in 2024 was significantly lower than in 2019.
- Non-overlapping error bars between 2019 and 2024 indicate a **statistically distinguishable decline** rather than recovery.



**Figure 2. O‘ahu yellow tang abundance (NOAA).** Estimated yellow tang abundance around O‘ahu before and after the 2020 cessation of aquarium collecting. The 2024 estimate shows a marked decline relative to 2019 with non-overlapping error bars, indicating a statistically distinguishable decrease rather than recovery.

**Across both islands, ending aquarium collecting did not produce sustained population recovery. Instead, post-closure abundance either declined or reverted toward levels observed during active collection.**

### Why These Results Are Reliable

- West Hawai‘i conclusions rely on long-term DAR monitoring conducted prior to 2022, when survey effort was robust and statistically sound.
- NOAA monitoring provides an independent dataset showing consistent outcomes across islands.
- Claims of recent “upward trends” rely on post-2022 data, when DAR reduced sampling from 3–6 survey rounds per year to a **single annual survey**—substantially reducing statistical power.
- Large and overlapping error bars in NOAA data limit the ability to infer recovery trends, but do not obscure the absence of population doubling where recovery was expected to be most evident.

### Implications for Legislative Action

Empirical monitoring data no longer support the assumption that reef fish populations will reliably recover following aquarium collecting, even after harvest pressure is fully removed. Continued authorization of commercial aquarium collecting therefore entails significant ecological and management risk, particularly for species that have already experienced decades of intense exploitation. The Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) has stated that it lacks the authority to permanently end aquarium collecting through rulemaking alone.

Permanent legislative prohibition is therefore necessary to prevent further long-term harm to Hawai‘i’s reef ecosystems and to provide clarity, consistency, and durability in state marine conservation policy.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Rene Umberger | [rene@forthefishes.org](mailto:rene@forthefishes.org)**



9 February 2026

TO: COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS, and  
COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

FOR HEARING: Tuesday, February 10, 2026, 1:00 PM Conference Room 224

r.e. In **Support** of Senate Bill No. **2996**  
(Relating To Environmental Protection)

Dear Chairs Richards and Lee, Vice-Chairs Lamosao and Inouye, and members of the respective Committees,

I **strongly support the provisions in this bill at the end of Section 1** (Page 3, lines 6-16) that allow for *“the following practices to continue:*

- (1) The issuance of special activity permits pursuant to section 187A-6 Hawaii Revised Statutes;*
- (2) The issuance of recreational permits for the non-commercial capture of aquatic life for aquarium purposes, in accordance with existing laws and rules regarding compliance with environmental assessments; and*
- (3) Captive-breeding and aquaculture efforts, as regulated by section 187A-3.5 Hawaii Revised Statutes.”*

These provisions would alleviate the burden on DAR, requiring them to issue an SAP for each and every collection of any form of marine life – even that which is otherwise unregulated – taken from within the West Hawaii Regional Fisheries Management Area (WHRFMA).

As currently written, the statutes **obligate DAR to issue an SAP for all purposes**, for all organisms, including aquaculture breeding purposes for any collection in the WHRFMA. This creates unreasonable delays, and clogs the already-busy permit processes in DAR. Our most recent permit for collecting uku for broodstock (breeders) took over 6 months, out of a 24 month Federally-funded research program. This meant that we lost an entire summer when we could have been conducting spawning and hatchery research trials to culture uku. Instead, we were stalled in bureaucracy.

At the same time, however, we could have gone out into the WHRFMA area and caught and killed as many uku as we wanted to, with no permit required. So long as the uku were over 1 lb, and we weren't fishing in an FRA, we could have killed a thousand uku. But because we wanted to catch twenty uku **and keep them alive**, we needed an SAP.

I believe that this existing requirement is a disincentive to aquaculture research in Hawaii. By stifling R&D, it limits our potential to grow more sustainable fish, and alleviate pressure on wild stocks. It therefore is counter to the intent of the original aquarium-fishing legislation.

I am trained as a marine biologist, and have worked in fisheries management and aquaculture my entire professional life. I have lived in Kona for over 35 years, and in that time have started up a number of aquaculture R&D companies, working with native Hawaiian species, to increase the bounty of our oceans, to create jobs, and to help feed our communities.

I have worked with the native Hawaiian black-lip pearl oyster, a range of marine foodfish – including kahala (aka kanpachi), ulua, giant grouper, omilu, moi and mahi mahi – and aquarium fish – including Flame Angels and Yellow Tangs – and most recently limu. I am also a member of the West Hawaii Fisheries Council.

Whatever your attitude towards aquarium-fish collecting, the regulations should not hinder the progress of scientific research that is key to a deeper understanding of our marine environment, the creation of new industries and jobs, and the provision of sustainable, local supplies of food for our people.

Thank you in anticipation.  
Sincerely, with aloha,



Neil Anthony Sims, M.Sc.  
Founder, CEO, Ocean Era, Inc.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 12:50:00 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Wailana Medeiros	Testifying for KUPA - Friends of Hookena Beach	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Wailana Medeiros, and I am from Ho‘okena on the Island of Hawai‘i. I come from a long line of fishermen and women, from one of the last stronghold fishing villages on the Kona Hema coast. I strongly support SB2996, to ban aquarium fishing in our state marine waters. We have seen the adverse affects of aquarium fishing, and it just does not make sense to take our food stock out of the water to be used as ornaments far away from where they are supposed to be. Not only are these fish our main staple protein, but they also help to keep our reefs healthy and clean. To remove them, and make a profit off of them makes no sense. Allowing this does not align with Hawai‘is public trust doctrine. As a legal principle, protected in our state constitution, DLNR must hold all public natural resources in trust for the benefit of the people of Hawai‘i. Public trust resources are not for commercial export. Not to mention, many of those making a profit off of our cultural resources are those that are not a part of our culture, who have no regard for how this affects us as a Hawaiian people. Again, I am urging the state to pass SB2996.

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 1:11:32 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shane Akoni Palacat-Nelsen	Testifying for Hoʻāla Kealakekua Nui, Inc.	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Chair Richards and Vice Chair Lamosao,

Hoʻāla Kealakekua Nui, Inc. is in strong support for SB2996, which prohibits the harvesting of aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes, regardless of the method of collection.

Although AQ prohibitions are in place at Marine Life Conservation Districts (MLCD) and Community-Based Subsistence Fishing Areas (CBSFA), these places are not set up to police AQ and restore optimum abundance for Hawaii Waters. There are numerous community meetings and reports that prove commercial pet-trade industry has been proven extractive and destructive by former AQ Commercial Traders, Friends for the Fish, and others. The State should no longer tolerate such industries especially when it has a cumulative negative impact on existing industries such as tourism, aquaculture, and other marine and fishpond economies that the State has and continues to invest in.

HKN also understands how special interest groups will weaponize Native Hawaiian Rights and laws that are intended to protect practice, customs, and religion for subsistence purposes and that commercialization does NOT fall within these protections.

We urge this legislature to seriously pass SB2996 and address the decades of abuse on our marine ecosystems.

Mahalo nui,

Shane Akoni Palacat-Nelsen, Executive Director

**LATE**

Moana Ohana  
PO Box 4454, Kailua Kona, HI 96745  
Phone (808) 640-3871 Fax (808) 325-5560  
[mike@moanaohana.com](mailto:mike@moanaohana.com)  
February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026



SENATOR HERBERT M. "TIM" RICHARDS, III, CHAIR  
SENATOR RACHELE LAMOSAO, VICE CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

SENATOR CHRIS LEE, CHAIR  
SENATOR LORRAINE R. INOUE, VICE CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE, AND THE ARTS

TESTIMONY IN **STRONG SUPPORT** OF SENATE BILL 2996,  
**WITH OHA'S PROPOSED AMENDMENTS**

Tuesday, February 10, 2026  
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

Dear Chair Richards, Vice Chair Lamosao, Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Committee Members:

Moana 'Ohana submits this testimony in **strong support** of SB 2996, which would ban commercial aquarium collection statewide. We also **support the Office of Hawaiian Affairs' proposed amendments**, which would additionally repeal Haw. Rev. Stat. § 188-31 and more completely fulfill the legislation's purpose.

My name is Mike Nakachi, I am from Kekahawaiole, on Moku o Keawe. I come to you humbly and with aloha! I bring into this conversation and testimony the legacy of my 'ohana, my kūpuna, my 'aumakua, with my steadfast love for our pae 'āina. I am a dive professional with over 40 years of experience, a practitioner of traditional Native Hawaiian customary rights and principles of aloha 'āina, to mālama this 'āina and try as best as we can to restore the abundance of 'āina momona. I am blessed to have a mo'okū'auhau that has guided me in the lineage as Kahu Manō. Through these practices it has allowed me the privilege and the honor to be blessed by forms of akua and kinolau in the realm of Kanaloa throughout our pae 'āina.

I have dived extensively our home waters for well over several thousands of scuba/ rebreather dives with the majority of this experience conducted within the West Hawai'i regional fisheries management area. With pure intent to be as one with

Kanaloa, dives are always conducted with proper protocol, asking permission of people, communities place or wahi pana. Our Home waters are in desperate need of relief, SB2996 will do just that.

I am a small business owner in West Hawaii, called Moana Ohana, we have 15 employees, some of whom have been with me for over thirty years. We have all witnessed the decline of our precious ancestors (Aquarium fish) of aina over the decades that is a direct impact on us as cultural partitioners as well as a business that needs a healthy, vibrant ecosystem of aina to be successful.

When I started in the 1980s abundance was different with many fish along West Hawai'i. Despite a seemingly flourishing abundance, a lot of damage was already inflicted by tropical aquarium fishermen from the 1960's when it first really got going in West Hawaii. Aquarium collectors used destructive and self-serving methods to collect fish such as breaking corals and making flat trenches along the reef to create barriers and dividing sections of the reef to lay their nets flat and herd the fish to be collected. These harmful methods continued into the 1990s and 2000s. We saw significant changes to our home waters with a drastic increase of the number of collectors with no regulation and an unlimited catch limit. The invasive nature of humans not of place, in search of aquarium fish caused millions of fish to leave their home. The practice of greed and being for themselves driving the high take of fish and caused ecological damage. This irreparable harm to coral, fish, ecosystems over the last few decades is glaring and polarizing, this is NOT sustainable. It should NOT be acceptable that these non-pono ways of fishing are allowed.

The DAR is again going in another direction, saying AQ is low impact, this is a breach of trust to many in West Hawaii. They have clearly stated here that they have worked closely with the 7 collectors but have reached out to any of us small business owners in this community last month to ask us about the negative and cumulative impacts that this particular fishery has had on us as Kanaka Maoli, and Native Hawaiian business owners. Please reject this request. DAR who works closely with these destructive fisheries, enables these AQ collectors, who do nothing to show Aloha for our aina, Malama our aina or restore Aina Momona in any way!

I ask that you do the right thing: Strongly support SB2996 with support of the proposed amendments from the office of Hawaiian affairs,

Malama Pono,

Michael Nakachi,  
Moana Ohana LLC

**LATE**

## **Aquaculture of High-Value, Marine Aquarium Fish**

### Opportunity

The global Marine Aquarium Trade is worth an estimated \$2.15 billion per year. U.S. hobbyists represent the largest market for marine aquarium fish and Hawaii has been a major supplier of wild-caught fish for the aquarium trade until recently. In 2017, the Hawaii Supreme Court issued a temporary moratorium on collection of these aquarium fish pending the completion of a comprehensive environmental impact statement. Currently, it is unknown when, or if, collection of marine aquarium fish from the wild will resume in Hawaii. In light of this situation, **the captive-rearing of high-value, marine aquarium fish represents a potentially significant business opportunity in Hawaii**, despite technical challenges currently limiting the industry's expansion. Technical challenges include: 1) the lack of a predictable supply of high-quality fish eggs; and 2) difficulties associated with rearing the tiny fish larvae to market size. If these challenges can be overcome, there is a significant opportunity for industry expansion in Hawaii to provide a global market with cultured marine aquarium fish. Cultured fish likely would be more hardy than their wild-caught counterparts and there would be no impacts on coral reef health.

### Leveraging past investments

Oceanic Institute of Hawaii Pacific University (OI; Waimanalo, Hawaii) has been conducting research on marine fish aquaculture since the 1970s with funding from federal and State governments, as well as the private sector. Most of OI's research has focused on the culture of marine fish for human consumption, including work with moi, 'ama'ama, and mahi mahi. While OI's 60-year history developing maturation, hatchery, nursery, and growout techniques for edible marine fish has helped create viable aquaculture businesses in Hawaii, these technologies have recently been applied to the culture of marine aquarium fish with great success. In 2015, OI succeeded in overcoming technical challenges associated with culturing Yellow Tang (lau'īpala), an iconic coral reef fish in Hawaii and popular among aquarium hobbyists. To date, no other research organizations in the world has succeeded in culturing this species in captivity. Over the past few years, OI researchers have modified these culture methods in an effort to produce other high-value aquarium fish native to Hawaii.

### Creating a new industry

The State of Hawaii is uniquely poised to catalyze an aquaculture industry to produce high-value, marine aquarium fish for a growing, global market. The advantages of supporting such an industry in Hawaii include: 1) it requires a small amount of land, unlike producing fish for food; 2) it requires high-quality seawater which we have in abundance in Hawaii; 3) it requires content experts to develop new knowledge and transfer existing technologies; and 4) it produces high-value, export products (live fish) for a global market, including nearby markets in the Pacific Rim. Aquaculture production of coral reef fish for the aquarium industry will create local, high-paying jobs and help supply a rapidly growing market, while conserving an invaluable resource. Ensuring Hawaii's near-shore waters are full of vibrant, healthy fish is vital for our local communities and essential in maintaining Hawaii's coral reef habitat.

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:23:47 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
savetheseaturtlesinternational	Testifying for Save the sea turtles international & One Ocean Conservation	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

On behalf of One Ocean Conservation and Save The Sea Turtles International, we strongly support this measure to prohibit the commercial collection of reef wildlife for the aquarium trade in Hawai‘i. Coral reefs are living infrastructure that sustain fisheries, protect coastlines, support cultural practices, and generate billions in economic value, yet they are already under extreme stress from climate change and human extraction. Herbivorous reef fish play a critical role in controlling algal overgrowth and maintaining coral health, and decades of aquarium collection have severely reduced their populations, compromising reef resilience at a time when it is most needed. The failure of heavily collected species to recover, even after collection pauses, highlights the long-term ecological harm and the inadequacy of continued management of this trade. This bill aligns with Hawai‘i’s constitutional duty to protect public trust resources and represents a responsible, science-based action to ensure healthy reefs for future generations while allowing sustainable, non-extractive alternatives to continue.

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 9:47:04 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kimeona Kane	Testifying for Waimanalo Neighborhood Board #32	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

aloha mai kākou,

The Waimānalo Neighborhood Board #32 stands in strong support of this item.

Mahalo nui,

Chair Kimeona Kane



**LATE**

The Senate  
Committee on Hawaiian Affairs  
Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts  
Tuesday, February 10, 2026  
1:00 pm Conference Room 224 & Videoconference  
State Capitol

### Testimony Providing Comments on SB 2996

Aloha Chairs Richards and Lee, Vice Chairs Lamosao and Inouye, and Members of the Committees,

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) is **providing comments on SB 2996 Relating to Environmental Protection**. This bill prohibits the collection of aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes. CGAPS has no position on this issue; however, we are providing comments to inform the Committees of additional issues affecting Hawaii reefs.

Data provided by the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) on non-native aquatic species detections in Hawaii waters shows that there is a significant increase in detections of marine aquarium species on our reefs (see table on p. 2). In the past decade, there were 13 non-native species detected on Hawaii reefs, all of which are popular aquarium species, and all were illegal to import, possess, and release into the environment. In the two decades before that, there was one. This reflects a global trend where the marine aquarium trade is a growing international industry, and the U.S. is the biggest consumer of species. Some of these newly detected species are spreading in our environment, carpeting and smothering coral, and decreasing fish abundance and diversity. Some of the new detections are the result of ill-informed aquarium dumps, while others show evidence of purposeful outplanting, likely for harvest and sale on the black market. Agencies are spending millions of dollars to try to eradicate several of these species, and much more is at stake if they fail.

We bring these comments to you with the hope that some additional regulatory help can be provided. At this time, the Hawaii Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (DAB) has authority over possession of illegal animals (including unpermitted non-native marine species), while DAR (via DOCARE) has authority over species released into the environment. If this bill moves forward, we respectfully request that language be added to strengthen the state's ability to investigate and enforce illegal possession and outplanting.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 2996 and for your consideration of our testimony.

Aloha,



Christy Martin  
CGAPS Program Manager



Stephanie Easley  
CGAPS Legal Fellow

DLNR DAR data for non-native aquarium/pet trade species detections in Hawaii waters since 1922

Species	Common name	Detected in Hawai'i	Biogeographic Status	Biogeographic Status Ref	Aquaculture	Aquarium/pet Trade
<i>Poecilia reticulata</i>	guppy, rainbowfish	1922	Introduced	Nico et al 2023k; Devick 1991b		yes
<i>Procambarus clarkii</i>	crayfish	1923	Introduced	Nagy et al 2023	yes	yes
<i>Thorichthys meeki</i>	firemouth	1940	Introduced	Devick 1991a, 1991b; Nico et al 2023g	yes	yes
<i>Limia vittata</i>	Cuban molly	1950	Introduced	Nico et al 2023j; Brock 1960		yes
<i>Poecilia salvatoris</i>	liberty molly	1950	Introduced	Devick 1991b		yes
<i>Pomacea bridgesi</i>	apple snail	1962	Introduced	Cowie 1998		yes
<i>Archocentrus nigrofasciatus</i>	convict cichlid	1983	Introduced	Nico et al 2023d		yes
<i>Ancistrus c.f. temminckii</i>	catfish	1984	Introduced	Nico et al 2023c		yes
<i>Liposarcus multiradiatus</i>	long-fin armored catfish	1986	Introduced	Nico et al 2023a; Devick 1991b		yes
<i>Amphilophus citrinellum</i>	Midas cichlid	1989	Introduced	Nico & Neilson 2023a		yes
<i>Centropyge flavissima</i>	lemonpeel angelfish	1990	Unknown	Carlton & Eldredge 2009		yes
<i>Hemichromis elongatus</i>	five spot/jewel cichlid	1990	Introduced	Nico 2023b		yes
<i>Hypostomus c.f. watwata</i>	armored catfish	1990	Introduced	1989		rare
<i>Amphilophus labiatum</i>	red devil	1991	Introduced	Nico et al 2023b		yes
<i>Corydoras aeneus</i>	bronze catfish	1991	Introduced	Nico & Schofield 2023		yes
<i>Neocardina denticulata sinensis</i>	grass shrimp	1991	Introduced	Benson 2023a		yes
<i>Parachromis managuensis</i>	Managuense	1992	Introduced	Nico et al 2023f	yes	yes
<i>Pygocentrus nattereri</i>	red piranha	1992	Failed	Devick 1992		yes
<i>Apolemichthys xanthopunctatus</i>	Goldspotted angelfish	1992	Failed	working group comms		yes
<i>Trachemys scripta elegans</i>	red-eared pond slider turtle	1996	Introduced	Somma et al 1996	yes	yes
<i>Discosoma nummiforme</i>	mushroom anemone	1997	Introduced	Carlton & Eldredge 2009		yes
<i>Hypsophrys nicaraguensis</i>	spilotum	2000	Introduced	USGS 2023; Mundy 2005		yes
<i>Anguilla marmorata</i>	marbled eel	2002	Failed	Mundy 2005	yes	yes
<i>Piaractus brachypomus</i>	red-bellied pacu	2004	Failed	Wright 2004	yes	yes
<i>Melanochromis johannii</i>	Johanni cichlid	2005	Introduced	Nico 2023c		yes
<i>Montipora c.f. stellata</i>	tubbs stellata montipora	2018	Introduced/mitigated	AIS Rapid Response Kaneohe		yes
<i>Montipora digitata</i>	finger coral	2018	Introduced/mitigated	AIS Rapid Response Kaneohe		yes
<i>Montipora foliosa</i>	Cabbage coral	2018	Introduced/mitigated	AIS Rapid Response Kaneohe		yes
<i>Anemonia manjano</i>	Manjano anemone	2018	Introduced	AIS Rapid Response Kaneohe		yes
<i>Unomia stolonifera</i>	pulsing Xenia, pulse coral	2020	Introduced	Bolick & Lee 2023/R. Toonen		yes
<i>Seriatopora sp.</i>	Needle coral	2021	Introduced/mitigated	Kauai DAR comms		yes
<i>Malaclemys terrapin</i>	diamondback terrapin	2022	Estab. unknown		yes	yes
<i>Anemonia manjano</i>	Manjano anemone	2023	Introduced	US Navy		yes
<i>Capnella cf. spicata</i>	tree octocoral	2023	Introduced	Bolick & Lee 2023/R. Toonen		yes
<i>Euphyllia ancora</i>	Hammer coral	2023	Introduced	2024		yes
<i>Rhodactis sp.</i>	Mushroom corallimorph	2023	Introduced	2024		yes
<i>Apolemichthys xanthopunctatus</i>	Goldspotted angelfish	2023	Introduced	working group comms		yes
<i>Montipora foliosa</i>	Cabbage coral	2025	Introduced	AIS Rapid Response Kaneohe		yes
<i>Capnella cf. spicata</i>	tree octocoral	2025	Introduced/responding	AIS Rapid Response Kaneohe		yes

White: Freshwater species

Blue: Marine species

There have been 39 documented introductions of aquarium/pet trade species since 1922,

There have been 13 non-native marine aquarium species detected in Hawaii waters in the past ten years; and only one in the two decades prior to that.

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 10:01:06 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Godfrey Akaka	Testifying for The Native Hawaiian Gathering Rights Association	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We the NHGRA are in strong opposition to SB2996 for the following reasons. Fishing both subsistence and commercial has always been a cultural practice here in Hawai'i. The fishery has been scientifically proven to be sustainable. The climate change argument is based on theories and guessing. Stopping people from fishing is not going to change the weather. Climate change is being used as a scare tactic to accomplish agendas. There is a study produced by Alan Friedlander during covid off Molokini that during the covid shut down there was an increase of biomass from the lack of presence of people in the water in 2 weeks. However, fishermen are always the target and blamed for overfishing. Asking for exemptions for commercial and recreational activities is a clear indication of trying to eliminate the competition for their private business interests. This bill is not pono. Mahalo.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 12:00:32 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Douglas Perrine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

An overwhelming majority of Hawaii residents favor leaving our ornamental reef fish on the reef where all residents and visitors can enjoy them, where they can perform their vital ecosystem functions, such as consuming coral-smothering algae, and where they can contribute to the reproduction and perpetuation of the population - rather than being removed from the ecosystem and shipped off-island for captivity in small private tanks for the pleasure of an individual or small number of people during an artificially shortened life. Please pass SB2996 to protect our native fish, coral reef ecosystems, and our nascent aquaculture industry raising ornamental fish inshore for the commercial trade.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 12:25:05 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Robert H Pecoraro Jr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It's unfortunate that supporters of healthy Hawaiian reefs must keep fighting to defend the tropical fish that inhabit our waters and keep the aquatic environment in balance. You would think that it would be a no-brainer, and those charged with protecting it, would actually work toward those means. The Division of Aquatic Resources has a mission statement on the first page of their website, which reads: " The mission of the Division of Aquatic Resources is to work with the people of Hawai'i to manage, conserve and restore the state's unique aquatic resources and ecosystems for present and future generations." It seems to me that they are working for the benefit of a few of the people of Hawaii, to the detriment of all others. Hawaii's reefs are already suffering badly, because of climate change and sewage spills/leakages into our once pristine ecosystem. Now they want to add the pressure of removing the fish that keep the algae at bay. These herbivores give the reefs at least a fighting chance to survive. Since the tropical fish collecting ban, the populations of these fish, and other popular aquarium trade fishes have increased. We are finally seeing once rare fish, such as Longfin Anthias, Bicolor Anthias, Flame Wrasse and other fish that had all but disappeared whilst they were being collected. The fish that are collected have a high mortality rate. Those that survive end up in an aquarium, for a few to enjoy, rather than remaining on the reef, free for all to enjoy, while keeping the ecosystem in balance. Before we moved to Hawaii, we traveled here frequently to dive and enjoy a unique environment, where about 25% of the aquatic life is endemic to Hawaii. We should strive toward preserving these creatures in their natural environment, rather than allowing them to be collected, killed and/or shipped out of Hawaii. It makes no sense to allow tropical fish collection again, especially since it has been banned for six or seven years. Please consider the wishes of those who care, including Native Hawaiian groups, and do the right thing. Please put a permanent ban on tropical fish collection and help give the reefs a fighting chance to survive. I respectfully request that board should take the following actions: Please Pass SB 2996 out of committee. Robert Pecoraro, Kailua Kona

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 12:31:28 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
linda willaby	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Linda Willaby. I have lived in Kalapana on the Big Island for over 17 years. I support SB2996 because it is important to keep Hawaiian reef fish here in Hawaii on the reef. Reef fish are vital for the health of the reef. There are many other reasons to put a permanent ban on aquarium fish collection and I am sure you know those reasons as I have testified multiple times about this. I snorkel in the ocean almost every day and in my 17 years here I have seen a decrease in the numbers of reef fish. Please protect them by passing SB 2996.

Sincerely yours ,

Linda Willaby

Please ban aquarium fish collection in all of Hawaii.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 12:33:04 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nicole LeClaire	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Collecting Hawaiian reef fish for aquariums is selfish and damaging. These fish are not decorations — they are essential to the health of our reefs. Populations are struggling, and continued collection prevents true recovery. If we care about Hawaii’s oceans, we must stop taking from ecosystems that are already under immense stress.

Support the ban on collecting reef fish and prosecute those who are collecting these fish illegally!

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 12:39:29 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carol Davies	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please, please, do not betray the fish nor the coral by allowing aquarium collecting to recommence. This ban should be made permanent!

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 12:51:13 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Patricia Cadiz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my **STRONG SUPPORT** of banning all aquarium fish collecting in Hawaii because...

- Ongoing **illegal poaching** for the aquarium trade, despite **four criminal convictions in the past five years involving at least ten industry members.**
- The trade's fundamental conflict with **local culture and Native Hawaiian values**, including pono fishing practices that limit take to what is truly needed.
- Its inconsistency with **mālama 'āina** and the State's **constitutional public-trust obligation** to protect natural resources for present and future generations.
- **Published cost-benefit analyses** showing residents receive **no public benefit** from the aquarium trade while bearing **all environmental and enforcement costs.**

**This is a "no-brainer". Protect our reef species. Reef species are nature's protectors of our precious coral reefs. Our coral reefs are nature's protectors of our beaches and shores. It is your kuleana - your responsibility to preserve and protect our natural resources.**

**Thank you!**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 12:54:42 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tom Wallace	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is critical that aquarium fishing be banned. Aquarium fishing only benefits of very small number of people while damaging the environment for everyone. Our values should be to promote a healthy reef ecosystem. Not only for the enjoyment of snorkelers both residents and visitors, but also because it is just simply the right thing to do to take care of the ocean.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 1:08:28 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lynn Allen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 1:58:33 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
nicholas N Hurd	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Our vibrant reef fish are not mere commodities; they are living threads woven into the sacred fabric of Hawai'i's marine ecosystem and cultural heritage. Every fish ripped from our reefs for distant aquariums leaves a hole in our delicate underwater communities, silencing their vital roles and diminishing the natural wonder that defines our islands. This relentless taking weakens our reefs, disrupts the balance our ocean ancestors entrusted to us, and robs future generations of the right to experience the true, thriving abundance of their native seas. **Enough is enough.** To protect our irreplaceable marine life and honor our kuleana as stewards, we *must* permanently end commercial aquarium collection. Please, legislators, heed the call of the ocean and our communities: **pass SB2996 out of committee now** – our reefs and their precious inhabitants cannot wait.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 2:04:12 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
lynne matusow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in full support. This is a much needed bill. Please move this measure forward.

Lynne Matusow

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 2:09:05 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristi Woodham	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong opposition to the proposed bill to ban aquarium fish collecting in Hawai‘i.

The aquarium fishery in Hawai‘i has repeatedly demonstrated that it can operate sustainably and responsibly. Over many years, collectors have complied with every state-required mandate, pause, and study. Extensive scientific research, much of it required by the State, has shown that regulated aquarium fish collecting does not cause long-term harm to reef ecosystems when conducted properly. The industry has done the work asked of it, adjusted practices when required, and followed the rules set by regulators.

Despite this, the proposed ban disregards those findings and the science that supports sustainable collection. Decisions of this magnitude should be based on data, not perception or pressure. Eliminating a fishery that has been shown to be sustainable undermines trust in the regulatory process and sends the message that compliance and research do not matter.

Beyond environmental considerations, this fishery provides critical jobs for local residents. Aquarium fish collecting supports divers, boat operators, wholesalers, retailers, and their families. These are skilled, local jobs that cannot be easily replaced—especially at a time when Hawai‘i residents are facing rising costs of living and limited economic opportunities. Banning this industry would disproportionately harm working local families who rely on it for their livelihoods.

I respectfully urge you to oppose this bill and instead continue to support science-based management that protects both Hawai‘i’s reefs and its people.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 2:29:14 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cathy Goeggel	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Animal Rights Hawai'i is in strong support of SB2996. The aquarium industry has demonstrated that it does not care what the majority of Hawai'i want ; the abuses and cruelty and the raping of our reefs needs to end now-else future generations will see nothing but bleached coral and empty seas.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 3:12:22 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
james ward	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a 20 years resident and scuba diver in south Kona I want to write in support of SB2996. Over the years I've noticed a noticable decline in certain species such as yellow tang ( and others) Having worked in the hospitality industry here it always concerned me when visitors would say " dont see as meny of those yellow fish at the monument" referring to kealakekua bay. There are enought threats to tropical reef fish ( ocean warming, acidity etc) without the aquarium trade removing the colorful fish that drive part of our tourism. From my observation there is no attention paid to sustainable practices by the collectors, just net whatever you can. The pono thing to do here is to protect the reef fish for future generations to enjoy.

Mahalo Nui

James Ward 808-895-9656

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 3:14:17 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jeannette Heidrich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2996. I live on the Big Island of Hawaii in Kailua Kona. The reef and its fishes need to be protected so that they can flourish again. The fishes are a huge benefit to the State of Hawaii, both for enjoyment of snorkelers and scuba divers as well as for the benefit of keeping our reefs healthy. So many of the fish collected commercially in the past died quickly, what a waste. it is tough enough to keep the reefs from dying from the septic problems, let alone add the collection of fish by commercial fish collectors. STOP this practice for good! Allow the citizens to take what they can eat, but STOP the collectors from taking this valuable resource out of the STATE, and letting the fish die. Also, the fish are abused when being collected. Reef fish make Hawaii famous-keep the reef fish on the reefs!!!!

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 3:15:10 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
ROBERT raimo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

collecting is a really bad idea. let's face it, Hawaii runs on tourism. if we continue to decimate reefs though collection it makes Hawaii less desirable as a destination for people who want to snorkel and see the reefs and fish. the greatest benefit to the most people is promoting our reefs and fish..Banning collection will help a lot. Please take steps to ban this ASAP

Robert Raimo

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 3:28:19 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
John von Schlegell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a landowner on Hawaii, I strongly support a ban on commercial aquarium fishing- the reefs are more valuable to our children as well as Hawaii's economic well being intact and healthy...short term gain for a very few commercial harvesters is irresponsible stewardship of our most precious resource. Mahalo,

John E von Schlegell

Kailua Kona

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 3:36:30 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Judith Soltz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

please pass this bill

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 3:59:09 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Grant Heidrich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Grant Heidrich and am a property owner at Kukio Community on the Big Island. I am a very active scuba diver and advocate for the preservation of ocean resources.

This includes the destructive practice of the collection of ornamental reef fish. This is not only ecologically destructive, it violates the underpinnings of Hawaiian cultural practices.

Please vote in favor of SB2996.

Thank you,

Grant Heidrich

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 4:03:50 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alex Gupton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Alex Gupton, a business owner and artist living in Kailua-Kona on the big island. I have made my living drawing and painting the fish and sea life of the Islands for the past 45 years. I have watched the numbers of fish being depleted by numerous collectors pulling our defenseless tropical fish without limit, rules, or guidelines for decades. If you would, help our reefs recover by banning this practice. Remember: it is one of the reasons many visitors come to see these amazing islands. Please permanently ban commercial aquarium collecting. **Please pass SB2996 out of committee.**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 4:17:49 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lon Wallace	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha~**

**I am writing today to offer full support of and sincere urging for rule change and/or ban regarding the aquarium gathering business here in our islands. I am a long-time resident of West Hawaii island, and avid waterman. Through the decades I have personally seen and experienced the grossly imbalanced impact this industry has had on our reef fish, from witnessing the large haul outs at Kawaihae Harbor with their collateral damage to more importantly the intense diminishing of the various populations out on our reefs. It was and is clearly an unsustainable practice that has negatively impacted the health of the waters and reef and clearly disturbed the ecological balance. Since the temporary ban went into effect around 2016, I and many others who use the waters for recreational, health and spiritual benefit have seen a slow but notable come back, even with the poachers still out there. It is still FAR from back to a fully healthy, balanced state, especially with the added stressor of coral bleaching we have experienced, but the improvement is obvious and a welcome change. We desperately need to keep Hawaii's fish in our waters for the continued health and restoration of the reef, and for all those locals and tourists who enjoy and derive benefit on many levels from their presence and corresponding healthy reef; not be taken for the relatively very few who want to capitalize on their removal for monetary gains with no regard for the negative impact they generate and short-sighted damage they leave behind.**

**Mahalo nui loa,**

**Lon Wallace, PhD.**

**Kamuela, Hawaii**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 4:18:06 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Keith Neal	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Richards and Lee, and members of the Committees:

I strongly support SB2996

The need is clear for effective and comprehensive reef protection:

Our coral reef ecosystems are challenged with ocean acidification and human caused ecological impacts. These conditions necessitate the utmost stewardship for optimum reef vitality. Reef corals and fishes are wild creatures and are a public good. The public good is not for the plundering and exploitation of the *commercial Aquarium Fish trade!* The Aquarium trade must shift into a growing/farming operations from a hunting/extraction operation.

I urge banning commercial Aquarium Fish taking in Hawaiian waters.

Heed the warning: 'Should the reef die, the waves take the land.'

Respectfully submitted,

Keith Neal

Waimea

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 4:20:41 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shannon Rudolph	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**SUPPORT!**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 4:25:30 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Neil Frazer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair & Committee Members,

Please pass SB2996 out of committee. Collecting Hawaii's reef fish for the aquarium trade can never be properly policed and therefore should be banned outright.

Sincerely,

Neil Frazer, PhD, Kailua, O'ahu



COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Chair  
Senator Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Senator Chris Lee, Chair  
Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair

February 9, 2026 1:00 PM

Subject: Testimony for SB2996 Strong Support- Relating to Environmental Protection

Aloha Chair Richards, Chair Lee, Vice Chair Lamosao, Vice Chair Inouye, and Members of the Committees,

My family owns and operates two ocean tourism businesses in Keauhou Bay, Kona. Our company is now in its third generation, and we have been serving Hawai'i's residents and visitors since 1971. Over these decades, we have seen firsthand both the economic value of healthy reefs and the gradual decline in coral and fish populations that threatens them.

SB2996 represents a thoughtful and balanced approach to reef management. Hawai'i's reefs are not only ecological treasures but also the foundation of our visitor industry, shoreline protection, and cultural connection to the ocean. The long-term health of these resources must remain the priority if we want sustainable economic activity to continue.

Reef fish—particularly herbivores—play a critical role in maintaining coral health and reef resilience. When these fish are removed, the impacts extend beyond the reef itself, contributing to weaker coastlines and reduced habitat complexity. These losses are difficult, if not impossible, to reverse. For many of us who depend on healthy reefs for our livelihoods, protecting these fish is a practical necessity, not an abstract environmental concern.

From more than 50 years of operating in and around Kealakekua Bay, including within the MLCD, I have observed a significant decline in native fish species that were once abundant. These fish are territorial, and their absence within protected areas raises serious concerns about populations along unprotected coastlines.

It is also worth noting that the aquarium trade exports the vast majority of collected marine life out of the state, while the economic benefits of intact reefs remain here—supporting local businesses, jobs, education, and cultural practices. Prohibiting the commercial take of reef fish for aquarium purposes helps ensure that Hawai'i's marine resources continue to serve the broader public interest.

SB2996 aligns with DLNR's mission to protect natural and cultural resources while supporting sustainable, long-term use. By prioritizing reef health now, we reduce the

need for more drastic measures in the future and preserve the economic and cultural benefits that healthy reefs provide.

I respectfully ask you to support SB2996 and help ensure that Hawaii's reefs remain resilient, productive, and protected for generations to come.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Mendy Dant  
President  
Fair Wind Cruises  
Kona Sunrise Charters  
Keauhou Bay, Kona, Hawaii

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 5:17:17 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hugh Baker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators. **I strongly support SB2996 and its companion bill in the House.** The practice of harvesting reef fish for aquarium purposes is a **taking of a public resource** that belongs to all of the citizens of Hawaii. The **AQ permit fees are so low** that they are a joke. There has been **inadequate funding for oversight and enforcement** of the few rules that have been in place. It is plain to anyone who spends time in the ocean that taking fish in the quantities the aquarium trade demands is **harmful to the ecosystem**. I have personally witnessed the harvesting of fish by these "collectors" and there is nothing in the least "sporting" about it; **they literally vacuum up fish from the reef!** Respectfully, this one is a no-brainer and is long overdue. Please put a **stop** to this harmful practice once and for all. Thank you.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 5:26:26 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Steve Dennis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My wife Sona and I are 23 years owners at the Mauna Lani Terrace on the Big Island. We were certified to dive in Kona in the early 1980s and have been diving and snorkeling here every since.

It is alarming to us the state of the declining fish populations and the deterioration of the corals. In is appalling to allow the taking of reef fish for the Aquairum trade. When we are not at our place on the Blg Island we teach ocean conservation at the world renowned Monterey Bay Aquarium. We encourage visitors to only buy tank raised reef fish noting that as many as 40% of wild caught fish die in transit and a large number die from poorly maintained home aquariums.

Would you allow native birds to be collected for people wanting them as pets. Please end aquairum collecting once and for all.

Mahalo,

Steve & Sona Dennis

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 5:28:34 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mary Keller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

For the umpteenth time, Hawaiians do not want our local fish removed for aquarium businesses! Why would we ever give away our precious marine life to aquarium businesses who profit from our loss? Leave our fish alone and respect Hawaii's aina! End of story, Mahalo!

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 6:30:48 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Manu Powers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the passing of SB2996. Mahalo for your time and efforts.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 6:49:24 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ron Elenbaas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a citizen of Hawaii and I am in the water at least 3 times a week for the last 5 years...from almost no fish, 5 years ago, the population has slowly increased but it is still marginal. It would be an outrageous act of betrayal to allow fishing to begin.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 6:49:43 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vivian S. Toellner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SAVE Aquarium Reef Fish from Extraction and Extinction. I have testify numerous time over years, trying to save Hawai'i's fish, please make it happen this year.

Aloha, Thank goodness the County of Hawaii County Council can join in to send a **STRONG MESSAGE** to the State, that we want our Island's natural resources protected from deadly commercial operations.

"They ruined Paradise to put up a parking lot."

If you would not do it on land for all to see, you should not do to the Ocean. We must preserve Hawai'i Natural Resources. Yes, that means limiting harmful activities.

Just stop the removal of Hawaiian Reef fish for the Aquarium Trade. Far more money is made by keeping the fish here and charging to see alive and well here in their natural habitat.

Please stop the blinking \$\$ dollar signs in peoples eyes... **Over and over, I have testified, Why does this persistently keep coming up? What kind of force, money, evil ? Is behind this.**

This reef life is sold and shipped in plastic bags to the continent and around the world to supply the global pet market for ornamental reef fish, instead of staying on the reefs to support ecosystem health and Native Hawaiian fishing practices that have been handed down for generations

Also a December 2025 article:

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-hi/pr/honolulu-man-who-trafficked-illegally-caught-hawaiian-tropical-fish-sentenced-probation>

Please protect Hawaii. Most Sincerely,

Vivian S. Toellner

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 7:00:30 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mark Schacht	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write after nearly forty years diving on Hawaii's reefs in very strong support of banning commercial aquarium harvesting. It's finally time to end this short-sighted, destructive and unsustainable activity. More than ever before, Hawaii's reefs deserve your protection and I urge you to both pass SB 2996 and to lobby this Governor to sign it onto law.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 7:10:25 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
MichaelGaulke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Members of the Hawaiian Senate,,

My name is Michael Gaulke and I live in Kailua Kona. I am an avid lover of the oceans of the world, and especially here in Hawai'i. I have been an avid diver all of my life and have logged over 600 dives over the past 60 years. The challenges that our oceans face are huge, ranging from raising temperatures, to plastics, to changing water chemistry. The wildlife in our oceans are also under a constant challenge. Not only do they have to contend with the changing environment, but there is a ongoing battle with man for survival. Just look at what man has done to the shark population in the world. An animal that has been on this planet some 400 million years and an apex predator has seen approximately 90% of its population destroyed by fishing and harvesting it for its fins to make soup. Hawai'i's reef fish are also in a fight for long term survival. The large-scale commercial extraction of reef fish makes their preservation that much harder to achieve. Our fish need to be protected and they need your help. I ask for your support in passing SB2996

Thank you for your service to our community and protecting of our reef fish,

Michael Gaulke

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 9:23:35 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

I am testifying in strong support of SB2996.

Please help to protect our reefs and our fish.

I am a scuba diver all along the Kona coast and appreciate being able to see all of our fishes in the water. I have heard stories of how many yellow tang there were in the past, and I hope we can get back to calling the Kona Coast the Gold Coast.

Please take action to prohibit the harvest of wildlife from our waters for the aquarium trade. We cannot wait for another department to say nothing can be done.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 8:37:36 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nanette Elenbaas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SB2996: I am a resident of Hawai'i Island. The reef population of fish is now starting to come back but no where near a healthy population. Please do the right thing to save our reef fish population.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 9:32:07 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Matt L	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and the more critical role: provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,



**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 9:39:05 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 10:05:38 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael Thomas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the

commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

[Your Name]

[City / Island]

[Optional: Organization]



## Sample Testimony 2:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection consistent with the public trust and the needs of Hawai‘i’s residents, including Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners and the public at large.

I fish to provide reef fish for many family, friends and kupuna in my neighborhood. The taking of aquarium fish on a commercial level has the potential to decimate many fish species and have an adverse effect on fish populations.

Commercial aquarium fishing flies in the face of Hawai‘i’s constitutional public trust doctrine, which requires that our natural and cultural resources be used and conserved for the public good rather than private gain. But the aquarium collection industry has extracted and exported millions of specimens of public trust marine life—the vast majority of which die within a year after collection—for private (primarily out of state) profit.

At the same time, this commercial activity has diminished the ecological and cultural integrity of our reef systems, undermined the state’s food security and climate resilience, and degraded a cornerstone of our tourism-based economy. Not surprisingly, the majority of Hawai‘i residents, and Native Hawaiian subsistence communities in particular, support a ban on commercial aquarium collection.

While commercial aquarium collection has not been allowed for the better part of a decade, the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) has recently proposed rules that would reopen West Hawai‘i waters to commercial aquarium collection, claiming that they are mandated to do so under state law. Yet as DAR has recognized, agency rulemaking regulates how an activity operates, not whether the activity should be allowed. Accordingly, the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to decide whether this activity should be permitted at all.

Healthy coral reefs and ecosystems support food security, cultural and subsistence practices, and provide shoreline protection. In addition, on-reef tourism activities that depend on vibrant and healthy ecosystems generate approximately \$1.2 billion annually for the state.

Therefore, a statutory ban is critical to protect what is not only a major economic engine for the state, but a cornerstone of resilience and self-sufficiency for our present and future generations from ever-increasing extractive stressors placed on our marine environment.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Michael Thomas

Kamuela, Hawaii

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 11:00:34 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brenten Kanoa Yamane	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection consistent with the public trust and the needs of Hawai‘i’s residents, including Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners and the public at large.

Commercial aquarium fishing flies in the face of Hawai‘i’s constitutional public trust doctrine, which requires that our natural and cultural resources be used and conserved for the public good rather than private gain. But the aquarium collection industry has extracted and exported millions of specimens of public trust marine life—the vast majority of which die within a year after collection—for private (primarily out of state) profit.

At the same time, this commercial activity has diminished the ecological and cultural integrity of our reef systems, undermined the state’s food security and climate resilience, and degraded a cornerstone of our tourism-based economy. Not surprisingly, the majority of Hawai‘i residents, and Native Hawaiian subsistence communities in particular, support a ban on commercial aquarium collection.

While commercial aquarium collection has not been allowed for the better part of a decade, the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) has recently proposed rules that would reopen West Hawai‘i waters to commercial aquarium collection, claiming that they are mandated to do so under state law. Yet as DAR has recognized, agency rulemaking regulates how an activity operates, not whether the activity should be allowed. Accordingly, the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to decide whether this activity should be permitted at all.

Healthy coral reefs and ecosystems support food security, cultural and subsistence practices, and provide shoreline protection. In addition, on-reef tourism activities that depend on vibrant and healthy ecosystems generate approximately \$1.2 billion annually for the state.

Therefore, a statutory ban is critical to protect what is not only a major economic engine for the state, but a cornerstone of resilience and self-sufficiency for our present and future generations from ever-increasing extractive stressors placed on our marine environment.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Brenten Kanoa Yamane

Honolulu, O'ahu.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/7/2026 11:07:58 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
M. Leilani DeMello	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I KĀKO‘O this bill, please ensure the safety and conservation of our aquatic life in our oceans. It is more important to have these fish in our waters than it is to have them in tanks around the world. Taking the fish for commercial use is affecting our ecosystems and throwing off the balance in our kai, please put an end to this practice.

Mahalo,

M. Leilani DeMello

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 1:10:45 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kawaiohawaiki Anakalea-Kila	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the

commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Kawaiohawaiki Anakalea-Kila

Honolulu Hawai'i

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 2:26:34 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lorenn Walker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB 2996 because it protects Hawai‘i’s coral reefs, which are essential to our ecosystems, food security, culture, and economy. The science is clear that herbivorous reef fish are critical to reef health, yet commercial aquarium collection has severely depleted key species with little evidence of recovery.

This bill appropriately prioritizes the public trust, constitutional environmental rights, and long-term sustainability over a commercial trade whose enforcement costs exceed its benefits. Importantly, SB 2996 preserves traditional and customary practices, non-commercial recreational use, and regulated aquaculture and captive-breeding.

Passing this bill is a necessary and responsible step to safeguard Hawai‘i’s reefs for future generations.

Mahalo for your public service.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 3:39:28 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Yuuko Arikawa-Cross	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

Reef species held in trust for Hawai'i's people should not be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities.

Healthy coral reefs and ecosystems support food security, cultural and subsistence practices, and provide shoreline protection.

I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo,

Yuuko Arikawa-Cross (O'ahu)

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 4:51:22 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Teresa Landreau	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawaii's constitution requires preservation of the sea and land for future generations. A worthy and crucial value we must uphold. DAR's own data confirms that following the 2017 court-ordered shutdown of the aquarium collectiong, **yellow tang populations failed to recover as biologically and historically expected.**

**Compounding the problem,** DAR has sharply reduced reef fish monitoring. After more than 20 years of scientifically robust surveys, West Hawai'i aquarium fish monitoring was cut from **4-6 survey rounds per year to just one**, leaving the State effectively blind to the status of reef fish populations already depleted by decades of aquarium collecting.

I personally have witnessed shocking decline in fish diversity and numbers now, compared with the 1970s. There are so many environmental threats to our water, we must do everything to help fish populations. Failure to pass this bill amounts to forfeiting our precious resources for private business profit that is unsustainable.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 6:29:03 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Phyllis Connors	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Collecting aquarium fish commercially negatively impacts many areas. It depletes their numbers. It seems against Hawaiian values of only taking what you need. Less fish means less healthy reef systems. Illegal fish collecting increases. Bad for all except people making profits. Please BAN it.

Phyllis Connors

75-212 Aloha Kona Dr. Kailua Kona

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 7:32:40 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Catherine West Dale	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the

commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Catherine West Dale

Hilo, Hawaii

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 7:35:55 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cynthia Harbert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e

Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

For this the opportunity to testify, on behalf of our haumana,

Mahalo

Cynthia Harbert

HIDOE teacher

Maui

cavah@icloud.com

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 7:36:24 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Hannalore Aiwohi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the committees,

I strongly support SB 2996 to prohibit commercial aquarium collection statewide.

Our coral reefs are vital to Hawai'i's environment, culture, and economy. They protect our shorelines, support fisheries and tourism, and are part of the legacy we hold in trust for future generations. Removing reef species for commercial sale weakens ocean health and undermines long-term stewardship.

The Hawai'i Constitution requires the state to protect natural resources and uphold the public trust. A clear prohibition on commercial aquarium collection aligns with that responsibility and provides clarity for enforcement and policy going forward. Given that the industry has been inactive for several years, now is the right time to act.

For the sake of ocean health and the legacy we leave our keiki, I respectfully urge you to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo.

Hannalore Aiwohi

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 7:38:07 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Inam Rahman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Dr Inam Rahman and I am writing in STRONG SUPPORT of SB2996, which would establish a clear statewide prohibition on the commercial collection of reef wildlife for sale and export as aquarium pets, while preserving scientific research/education and aquaculture/captive-breeding.

Why SB2996 is good public policy for Hawai‘i

1) It protects public trust resources and reef resilience.

Nearshore reef species—especially herbivores—are essential to keeping reefs healthy. Hawai‘i’s reefs are already under pressure from warming oceans, land-based pollution, invasive algae, and overuse. SB2996 makes a clear choice to treat nearshore reef species as public trust resources, not export commodities, consistent with Hawai‘i’s constitutional and public trust obligations (as described in the bill’s purpose section).

2) It reduces conflict and saves public resources.

Hawai‘i has spent years in recurring disputes over aquarium collection rules and permitting. DLNR/DAR has repeatedly clarified that aquarium collection remains closed and legally complex under court rulings and administrative processes. A statutory prohibition provides clarity and avoids an ongoing “re-open, litigate, revise” cycle.

3) It lets DAR focus on bigger, statewide priorities.

DAR capacity is limited. The state’s most urgent needs include reef recovery, community-based co-management, enforcement against illegal take, and broader ecosystem stewardship. SB2996 helps prevent public resources from being diverted into a specialized export-oriented permitting system.

Suggested amendments to strengthen SB2996 (if fiscally possible)

To make SB2996 stronger, fairer, and easier to implement, I respectfully recommend the following amendments:

A) Add a transition pathway for affected workers (fairness + political durability).

Create a modest transition assistance program for individuals directly and primarily reliant on commercial aquarium collection, such as:

- Time-limited job training support and placement into reef monitoring, enforcement support, or permitted aquaculture operations
- Priority consideration for DLNR-approved conservation and restoration work contracts

If general funds are tight, consider a “fiscally neutral” option: funding through permit fees in other commercial ocean uses, targeted grants, or federal conservation workforce programs.

B) Strengthen enforcement and data transparency.

- Clarify penalties for illegal commercial take and export facilitation
- Require annual public reporting by DLNR/DAR on enforcement actions and reef monitoring indicators relevant to collection species and reef function (simple dashboard format)

This improves trust and ensures the public sees measurable outcomes.

C) Define “commercial aquarium collection” tightly to prevent loopholes.

Include explicit definitions covering:

- “Commercial purpose,” “sale,” “export,” “broker/agent,” and “possession with intent to sell”
- Prohibit laundering through “hobby” channels when there is intent to sell/export

Clear definitions reduce enforcement ambiguity.

D) Expand and operationalize the aquaculture/captive-breeding carve-out.

SB2996 already preserves aquaculture and captive-breeding. Consider directing DLNR to:

- Establish a clear pathway for permitted captive-breeding operations
- Require traceability (documentation showing captive-bred origin) for any legal aquarium trade species from Hawai‘i

This supports innovation and reduces pressure on wild reefs.

E) Encourage co-management and community stewardship (makai-led).

Add legislative intent or direction prioritizing community-based co-management agreements where appropriate—so protections translate into locally guided stewardship.

Comparison with similar approaches elsewhere

Hawai‘i would not be alone in prioritizing reef protection over extraction:

- Palau has taken strong protective stances in marine management, including large-scale conservation measures (e.g., major portions of marine territory prioritized for conservation) as part of national policy to safeguard reefs and fish stocks.
- Florida restricts certain marine life collection in sensitive areas (for example, prohibiting collection of marine life at the Blue Heron Bridge site), showing that jurisdictions do prohibit aquarium-type collection in high-value habitats.
- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park uses zoning and structured restrictions to manage fishing impacts across a vast reef ecosystem—different mechanism than a ban, but the same principle: reef ecosystems require higher protection and careful limits.

These examples show a consistent trend: when reefs are critical ecological infrastructure, jurisdictions increasingly favor protection, restricted take, and conservation-first frameworks.

Conclusion

SB2996 is a practical, values-aligned measure that provides clarity, reduces conflict, and prioritizes reef health and public trust responsibilities. With the amendments above—especially transition assistance, clear definitions, and transparent reporting—SB2996 can be stronger, fairer, and more durable.

I respectfully urge you to PASS SB2996, preferably with these strengthening amendments if fiscally feasible.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Inam Rahman MD

Waipahu, HI

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 7:46:21 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
J. Kehau Lucas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and Members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill resolves a long-standing and unresolved policy conflict that administrative processes have failed to settle. At its core, commercial aquarium collection raises a fundamental threshold question: whether reef species held in trust for the people of Hawai‘i should be extracted for private profit and exported as ornamental commodities, largely to off-island markets. That determination is a legislative responsibility, not one that can or should be delegated to agency rulemaking or litigation.

The Hawai‘i State Constitution imposes clear obligations on the State to conserve and protect natural resources, safeguard environmental rights, and uphold Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. Commercial extraction of reef species for the aquarium trade is incompatible with these duties. Nearshore reefs are integral to subsistence practices, cultural transmission, and ecological balance, and their commodification undermines the State’s public trust responsibilities.

The economic evidence also supports prohibition. Healthy coral reef ecosystems generate over \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue, while providing irreplaceable ecosystem services such as shoreline protection, biodiversity support, and food security. The removal of reef species—even when characterized as “selective”—contributes to ecological imbalance, reef degradation, and long-term economic risk. Protecting reefs is not only an environmental imperative but a sound economic strategy.

A statutory ban provides clarity and enforceability where ambiguity has prevailed. It simplifies regulatory oversight, reduces enforcement burdens, and affirms that Hawai‘i’s nearshore reefs warrant the highest level of protection as public trust resources. Importantly, the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for approximately five years due to ongoing litigation, meaning that enactment of SB 2996 would formalize existing conditions without causing economic disruption.

SB 2996 allows the Legislature to decisively uphold constitutional mandates, protect Hawai'i's marine ecosystems, and provide certainty for communities, regulators, and future generations.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Aloha 'āina

J Kēhau Lucas

Wailuku, Maui

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 8:09:38 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Perry Olson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a long-time resident of the Big Island I have personally witnessed the growth of reef fish populations as well as the size of the fish as a result of the current commercial aquarium fishing ban.

The reefs and fish of Hawaii are one of the states most vital and living resources. It is simply incredible that large scale fish harvesting and reef intrusion would be allowed.

We owe it to the current populations, local and native fisherman, and future generations to protect these uniquely Hawaiian resources.

I strongly support this bill banning the harmful activities - which benefit outsiders and harm the local residents.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 8:29:48 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Steve Robertson	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aquarium fish collecting should have minimal effect on reef fish populations in a healthy reef system.

Curren declines are likely from reef degradation caused by 80,000 cess pools full of untreated poop flowing into coastal waters.

If you clean it, they will come.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 8:35:34 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Emily Johnston	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Please do everything you can to protect the natural environment and underwater ecosystems in Hawaii. The damage done by harvesting reef fish for the aquarium trade has proven to be extensive and difficult to recover from. Just another way the islands are pilaged for resources, leaving damage behind. All for some outsiders personal profit. Please bring an end to the harvesting of reef fish for the aquarium trade!

Mahalo

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 9:08:19 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alexandria Siwecki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Leave Hawaiian fish and reefs alone!

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 9:24:03 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Rowan Zwicky	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of SB2996 with the intention of protecting Hawai'i's reef marine life, as the ecosystem that has already been damaged and compromised is critical to our oceans health. Leaving the wildlife of Hawai'i's reefs undisturbed from humans exporting and removing animals from their homes is disrespectful and harmful to these sacred and extremely important natural environments. Please help protect our wildlife and keep our oceans safe and healthy.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 9:28:06 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kathleen Fleming	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT a statewide ban on fish collection for the aquarium trade. I would also SUPPORT greater enforcement efforts, since collectors no doubt continue to callously depopulate our reefs. Beside the immorality of removing wild species from their habitat, why would we choose to allow an offshore business to harm our economy, which is driven by visitors who are drawn by our clear waters and vibrant reefs? Any pols opposing a statewide ban must be on the take from the aquarium trade.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 9:28:08 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
WILLIAM MIDDLETON	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to support SB2996. The exporting of the reef wildlife of Hawai'i for commercial gain is unacceptable, the reefs are a critical backbone of the local ecosystem protecting our water quality, preventing coastal erosion, and providing food on many levels including supporting the overall health of our ocean. Commercial aquarium harvest is undoubtedly detrimental to critical fish species populations and therefore to our sensitive ecosystem as a whole.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 9:37:09 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeannine Johnson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I strongly support SB 2996**, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

My ancestors were lawai‘a (fishermen and women) and kālai wa‘a (canoe-builders) from Kapāhilua (Kona Hema) since 1777. My father was a lawai‘a from Miloli‘i and I spent many summers growing up there. The beauty of the fish and reefs near Miloli‘i were incomparable then. Many in my ‘ohana still live a life deeply connected to the land and sea and believe we should protect our ocean resources. It's my understanding that the aquarium fish collectors have caused significant reductions in the abundance of fish and their destructive fishing practices destroyed reefs all along the Kona coast. Hawaiians have a saying, “Ke ike a ka lawai‘a he na ka ‘upena.” (The knowledge of the fisherman is absorbed by the net.) Just like the ‘upena (fish net) which the Hawaiian people meticulously maintained to flourish and prosper, we need protect our coral reefs and ecosystems that support our cultural and subsistence practices. Allowing commercial aquarium fishing diminishes the ecological and cultural integrity of our reef system and flies in the face of Hawai‘i’s constitutional public trust doctrine which requires that our natural and cultural resources be used and conserved for the public good rather than private gain. In addition, the aquarium collection industry has extracted and exported millions of specimens of public trust marine life, the vast majority of which die within a year after collection, for private primarily out of state profit.

E ola ke kai, e ola kākou (as the ocean thrives, so do we.) No laila, please kōkua and help protect and preserve the valuable ocean resources we have left so that our keiki and mo‘opuna will be able to fish like our kūpuna and support SB 2996 too. Mahalo.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 9:45:44 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I stand in strong support of SB2996 to permanently ban the commercial collection of aquatic life for the aquarium trade. This bill is a critical, necessary, and long-overdue legislative action to end a destructive and extractive industry that has operated against the will of our communities, the health of our reefs, and our values for far too long. The path to this hearing has been paved by decades of community advocacy, sound science, and now, a unified call from the Hawai‘i County Council for a permanent, statewide ban.

**The State’s Agencies Have Failed in Their Trust Duty**

The recent history surrounding this issue is a story of profound institutional failure and betrayal of public trust. In 2023, the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) unanimously supported a community-led proposal for a permanent ban via administrative rule—only to abruptly reverse itself and claim it lacked authority, pushing the responsibility to you, the Legislature.

In a stunning act of bad faith, the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) then took that same proposal and transformed it into a framework to restart large-scale commercial extraction. This is a direct subversion of the community’s clear demand and the BLNR’s own initial, correct instinct. The legislature is now the last line of defense.

**Science Confirms the Damage and the Failed Recovery**

The scientific case for a ban is unequivocal. A recent independent expert analysis of DAR’s own data reveals a shocking truth: despite the 2017 court-ordered shutdown of the aquarium trade, yellow tang populations in West Hawai‘i failed to recover as biologically and historically expected.

Decades of extraction have done deep, lasting harm. Instead of ramping up science to understand this crisis, DAR has chosen willful blindness, slashing robust, 20-year monitoring programs from 4-6 survey rounds per year down to just one. The state is now managing in the dark, a dereliction of its constitutional public trust duty to protect these resources.

**The Industry is Fundamentally at Odds with Our Values and Law**

This trade is a model of exploitation, not conservation:

- **It is Culturally Destructive:** It conflicts fundamentally with Native Hawaiian values and pono fishing practices, which limit take to what is truly needed for sustenance and ceremony—not for the decorative pet trade. It is a violation of mālama ‘āina.
- **It is Criminally Compromised:** Despite four major criminal convictions in the past five years involving at least 10 industry members, illegal poaching for this trade continues. A legal framework only provides cover for ongoing black-market activity.
- **It is a Net Loss for Hawai‘i:** Published cost-benefit analyses confirm that the people of Hawai‘i receive no public benefit from this trade. Our residents bear all the environmental loss, enforcement costs, and cultural degradation, while a handful of private interests profit.

### **The Legislature Must Uphold the Public Trust**

The BLNR and DAR have demonstrated they cannot or will not solve this problem. The Hawai‘i County Council has spoken unanimously. The scientific data, even in its now-limited state, shows a reef in crisis and a fishery that cannot sustain this plunder. The community’s opposition spans decades.

SB2996 represents a decisive choice. Will we continue to allow a damaging industry to deplete our public trust resources for private gain, or will we finally fulfill our obligation to protect these vibrant reefs for the enjoyment, sustenance, and cultural practices of current and future generations of Hawai‘i’s people?

The answer is clear. I urge you to pass SB2996 and enact a permanent ban on the commercial aquarium trade. It is the only pono path forward.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 9:57:35 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Douglas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Despite the current ban, studies show that fish populations have still not recovered.**

**If we don't act now, the damage may become irreversible.**

**Wouldn't you want to tell your children and families that you stood up when it mattered — that you helped save our reefs?**

- Commercial aquarium collection has engendered decades of conflict over the profit-driven extraction of culturally and ecologically significant species, such as kole and other reef herbivores, from our nearshore ecosystems.
- Native Hawaiian subsistence communities, in particular, have called for the end of this extractive industry, which has impaired and disrupted subsistence fishing practices, and treats public trust marine resources as mere ornaments for off-island buyers.
- Studies show that 50% or more of targeted reef fish die during capture and transport, and most of the survivors die within the first year of captivity. In the wild, some species, like Yellow Tang, can live for decades.
- While the industry has been shut down for the better part of a decade pursuant to a court order, and despite surveys showing that the majority of Hawai'i residents support a ban, the state is now proposing rules to reopen collection in West Hawai'i.
- SB2996 would prevent the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) from claiming that state law requires them to allow commercial aquarium collection and eliminate the need to expend public resources on a costly permitting system.
- There are Native Hawaiian communities across kō Hawai'i pae 'āina waiting for DAR's support to co-manage their marine resources and address other urgent threats.
- This bill would allow DAR to focus attention where it is critically needed rather than on supporting an industry with negligible economic benefits to the state and its residents.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 10:00:33 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Monica Morris	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

Thank you.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 10:20:10 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexandra Grutter	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Lexa, Kapa'au, Hawaii Island

I support banning commercial aquarium collecting because our marine environment is already severely degraded, populations of fish are already being decimated by climate change, pollution, and land runoff, the financial benefits of collecting apply to only a few individuals, more benefits are obtained via tourism and having pristine fish populations, and because healthy reefs are important to the Hawaiian culture and lifestyle of our islands. I also urge all legislators to **pass SB2996 out of committee.**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 10:36:21 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janet Goodmanson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Reasons the aquarium trade must be permanently banned:**

- Ongoing **illegal poaching** for the aquarium trade, despite **four criminal convictions in the past five years involving at least ten industry members.**
- The trade's fundamental conflict with **local culture and Native Hawaiian values**, including pono fishing practices that limit take to what is truly needed.
- Its inconsistency with **mālama 'āina** and the State's **constitutional public-trust obligation** to protect natural resources for present and future generations.
- **Published cost-benefit analyses** showing residents receive **no public benefit** from the aquarium trade while bearing **all environmental and enforcement costs.**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 10:45:30 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kealakai Hammond	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Kealakai Hammond, Honolulu

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 10:45:53 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Leilani Olayon	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm am against the bill to allow commercial harvesting of ocean life for aquariums. Our ocean has suffered so much already. Instead of allowing more activity, we should be implementing seasonal fishing. We need our ocean to heal and give it a chance to recover!

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 10:48:24 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Maureen Datta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a Honaunau, South Kona resident since 1990. I strongly support SB2996. Collecting aquarium fish from our reefs is extractive and detrimental to our reef's health purely for financial gain. The death rate of collected fish is appalling and must not be allowed, full stop. About three mornings a week I swim with friends in Kealakekua Bay for health and exercise where we always encounter sea life and wonder at its beauty, magic and abundance- from fish to rays to glorious shafts of sunlight. Coral reefs are the rainforests of the ocean providing our planet with clean air and the fish living within are crucial to maintaining a balance.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 10:59:52 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Patricia Hoskin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: State Legislatures: I support SB2996. My name is Patricia Hoskin. I have owned a condo and lived in Maui full time since 2009. I love to snorkel. I can say that the amount of reef fish has drastically declined. The only place to see a variety is at Ahi'hi marine preserve. At Kameole 2, where I live there are probably under ten species left. Please protect our fish.  
thank you

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:11:41 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Stong support.

The reefs need all the support possible, and I dont think there is such thing as a healthy reef without the fish.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:18:50 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lahela Kahe'e Gomez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai'i's people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai'i's Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai'i's marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the

commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Lahela Kahe'e Gomez

Ewa Beach , Hi

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:24:17 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Edward Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha. I am submitting written testimony in support of SB2996.

Coral reefs are vital to the health and protection of Hawai'i. They provide natural barriers to waves from severe weather, a diversity of marine species to feed our local families, and provide economic benefits to local businesses and tourism. Coral reefs also are a unique ecosystem in of itself that provides life to various marine species we rely on. It is a proper balance of our natural resources and environment directly affects us.

I am not a marine biologist nor a scholar, but I am fully aware of the negative impacts of commercial aquarium fishing.

First, their practices/methods are unsustainable and impractical for maintaining the natural biodiversity and order of coral reefs and marine ecosystems. Every time they go out to the reefs, they'll continuously collect in that designated area until they deplete the population. Then they'll move on around the islands seeking for more until there's nothing left. It's a never ending cycle and it will eventually end when there are no more species to collect. It's just as bad as causing the extinction of a species and everything in this world is finite; hence my emphasis on unsustainable.

Second, these aquarium fishermen are the reason for the decline in the yellow tang population; they are a highly prized species to aquarium owners around the world who pay top dollar to have them displayed in their "glass cages." Each fish species on our coral reefs are vital and depleting even one species will cause a significant and detrimental impact.

Finally, I can imagine that the majority of these aquarium fishermen do not (and more than likely) have never been in possession of a commercial permit/license to legally collect and export any marine species. I am also certain they're conducting these illicit collections and exportations while attempting to evade State conservation officers with the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) as well as federal agents with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), which is a violation of the Lacey Act (18 U.S.C. 42).

In summary, commercial aquarium fishing does not provide any environmental protection to our coral reefs, our local economy, and our communities. It is nothing more than selfish individuals trying to line their pockets with profits without thinking about the repercussions of their actions.

There is no benefit to depleting our coral reefs and our marine resources and it would be a huge mistake to support this illicit practice.

I hope with an honest and sincere heart that you'll support SB2996 and ensure that we all protect our home for future generations.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:26:28 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diane Ware	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chairs and Committee Members,

I, Diane Ware, Moku O Keawe, and a majority of the residents of this island have supported a ban on the destructive extraction of our aquatic life from the fragile reef ecosystem for decades.

A recent **independent expert scientific analysis** of DAR’s own data confirms that following the 2017 court-ordered shutdown of the aquarium collectiong, **yellow tang populations failed to recover as biologically and historically expected.**

**Compounding the problem**, DAR has sharply reduced reef fish monitoring. After more than 20 years of scientifically robust surveys, West Hawai’i aquarium fish monitoring was cut from **4–6 survey rounds per year to just one**, leaving the State effectively blind to the status of reef fish populations already depleted by decades of aquarium collecting.

**Additional reasons the aquarium trade must be permanently banned are** Ongoing **illegal poaching** for the aquarium trade, despite **four criminal convictions in the past five years involving at least ten industry members.**

The trade’s fundamental conflict with **local culture and Native Hawaiian values**, including pono fishing practices that limit take to what is truly needed. Many Hawaiians and groups like Aha Moku, Miloli’i Community, Kiholo and Ka’upulehu oppose AQ fish collection permits benefiting the Pet Trade rather than local communities.

Its inconsistency with **mālama ‘āina** and the State’s **constitutional public-trust obligation** to protect natural resources for present and future generations.

**Furthermore published cost-benefit analyses** showing residents receive **no public benefit** from the aquarium trade while bearing **all environmental and enforcement costs.**

**I urge you to support local communities, traditional customs and our reef ecosystems by passing bill SB 2996.**

**Mahalo nunui,**

**Diane Ware Volcano Hawai'i 96785-0698**



**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:29:43 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Bianca Isaki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators,

Please support SB2996. The aquarium trade takes from Hawai`i's resources without replenishing them. The trade should be abolished. This will make it easier to enforce against commercial operators as there will no longer be a question about whether taking fish is ok in certain areas because the ban will be statewide.

Yours,

Bianca Isaki

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:52:28 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Christine C Andrews	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Christine C. Andrews and I am writing to urge you to pass SB2996 out of committee. I am a Maui resident and am fortunate to be able to swim regularly in our nearshore waters enjoying our wonderful reefs and fishes. Our reef resources are under attack by climate change. Allowing commercial taking of our reef fish, particularly herbivores which help to keep algal populations in check, needs to stop now.

On a recent trip to Minnesota it broke my heart to see our yellow tang displayed in a huge saltwater aquarium in a huge sporting goods retail store. The display was quite unique in that one could walk under and around it. I overheard a young boy exclaim "Mommy, Mommy can we buy that one?". He was pointing at a yellow tang. I do support marine education and believe there is a time and place for the public to learn about what lies in our oceans, but to allow the harvesting of our natural resources for profit and gain is a travesty.

It is in our State constitution that we have an obligation to protect our natural resources. Please be pono and pass this bill!

Thank you for considering moving this bill out of committee.

Christine

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:46:12 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Benjamin Guerrero	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection consistent with the public trust and the needs of Hawai‘i’s residents, including Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners and the public at large.

Commercial aquarium fishing flies in the face of Hawai‘i’s constitutional public trust doctrine, which requires that our natural and cultural resources be used and conserved for the public good rather than private gain. But the aquarium collection industry has extracted and exported millions of specimens of public trust marine life—the vast majority of which die within a year after collection—for private (primarily out of state) profit.

At the same time, this commercial activity has diminished the ecological and cultural integrity of our reef systems, undermined the state’s food security and climate resilience, and degraded a cornerstone of our tourism-based economy. Not surprisingly, the majority of Hawai‘i residents, and Native Hawaiian subsistence communities in particular, support a ban on commercial aquarium collection.

While commercial aquarium collection has not been allowed for the better part of a decade, the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) has recently proposed rules that would reopen West Hawai‘i waters to commercial aquarium collection, claiming that they are mandated to do so under state law. Yet as DAR has recognized, agency rulemaking regulates how an activity operates, not whether the activity should be allowed. Accordingly, the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to decide whether this activity should be permitted at all.

Healthy coral reefs and ecosystems support food security, cultural and subsistence practices, and provide shoreline protection. In addition, on-reef tourism activities that depend on vibrant and healthy ecosystems generate approximately \$1.2 billion annually for the state.

Therefore, a statutory ban is critical to protect what is not only a major economic engine for the state, but a cornerstone of resilience and self-sufficiency for our present and future generations from ever-increasing extractive stressors placed on our marine environment.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,  
Benjamin Guerrero,  
Maui County

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 12:14:50 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Amy Morgan Andaluz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We must take all available measures to protect the integrity of Hawai's reef. At a time when reef ecosystems are barraged by so many negative forces beyond our control, it is essential that we take this small step to protect the creatures in the ocean from profiteering. There is NO reason to be harvesting fish for such purposes as selling or keeping them captive. There are zero benefits to society, espeically given how tentative ecosystems are with the bleaching and decimation of reefs from runoff. Thank you for considering my testimony as a private citizen in favor of the ban on harvesting of fish for the aquarium markets.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 12:30:36 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jeanne Herbert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I strongly support SB2996 in favor of a statewide ban on commercial aquarium collecting. I am a resident based in Honolulu, Hawaii and have spent my whole life in the ocean across many of the Hawaiian islands. I have seen the negative effect of commercial aquarium collecting in Hawaii. Our numbers of fish are diminishing. Allowing aquarium collecting in our islands is not pono. Hawaii residents receive no benefit from the collecting, in fact we are negatively impacted. This is a critical moment to decide: do we want to support our marine life or do we want to sell out to commercial collectors?

Mahalo,

Jeanne Herbert

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 12:56:27 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Anna Myers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Having our fishes harvested by aquarium fishermen does not help our people in Hawaii yet we do have to pay for our reef fish being depleted and the reef being environmentally challenged. That is not fair to us!

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 1:10:54 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Darlene Scancella	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Commity members,

I STONGLY support SB2996 in that it completely ends the pilfering of our reef fish for profit from our waters. This is wrong on so many levels and should be apparent to anyone that cares even remotely about the health of our beautiful ocean, unless greed from the \$\$ of the lobbyists has overtaken your conscience. Leave Hawaiian oceans and their inhabitants alone now and forever, and SHAME if you want to profit off of our sealife.

Darlene Scancella

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 1:16:35 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Karen Holt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

PLEASE protect our fisheries! The number of native marine reef species has declined dramatically since my childhood days on O'ahu. Predatory commercial fishing has been one of the major causes for their decline. And often many of the fish taken end up dying on their way to vendors. Mālama nā i'a!

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 1:18:54 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Judith Graham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Judith Graham of Kamuela, Hawaii Island, a resident of over 60 years. Please, legislators, support SB 2996 and send it out of committee.

Here are three reasons: First, the BLNR tried to stop the commercial extraction of Hawaiian reef fish after receiving extensive community input. I gather the Board was advised that only the legislature could do it.

Second, I have seen a profit/loss study which showed an economic loss for the State except for a very few local beneficiaries. Popular concern in Hawaii is up against a large market in which Hawaii's reef fish are almost all shipped out of state.

Third, despite the familiar adage that aquariums bring good luck, such that one sees them in professional offices, etc., such aquariums are becoming a distasteful and pitiable sight for those of us familiar with the nearshore world. One dermatologist I visit had one *api* and an eel a while ago; last time it was just the eel left in the confined space.

Thank you.

Aloha,

I strongly support SB2996 banning the commercial extractible of tropical fish around the Hawaii Islands. I have swam in the waters around Maui multiple times each week for the last 40+ years. Over that time I have seen a dramatic decline in the tropical fish population and the degradation of the coral reef as a consequence. It is just heart breaking to see the dead and dying coral as well as *not seeing* the tropical fish. We should not decimate the marine life in our water so people can have colorful fish in an aquarium. Please put a end to the commercial aquarium trade and support SB2996.

Mahalo Nui Loa,

Janet Mercer  
Kihei Maui

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 1:32:25 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Richard Kersten	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

This is a very simple decision to make. All around the world the taking of live reef fish has been permanently banded! How this issue continues to circulate every so often here in the great state of Hawaii is baffling.

Please vote to support SB2996 to end the taking of live reef fish!

Thank you for your time

Richard Kersten

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 1:41:27 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mary Binder	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom this may concern:

I support this ban on the collection of reef fish for the aquarium trade.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 1:59:03 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Priscilla Stuckey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

**I strongly support SB 2996**, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai'i's people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai'i's Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than **\$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue** and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai'i's marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to **pass SB 2996**.

Mahalo,

Priscilla Stuckey, Kihei

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 2:17:37 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Elizabeth Ann K Poire	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Elizabeth Poire  
Kailua Kona, Hawaii



**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 2:33:09 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Theismann	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

**I strongly support SB 2996**, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than **\$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue** and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the

commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to **pass SB 2996**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

John Theismann

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 2:36:30 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cynthia Punihaole Kennedy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 8, 2026

Subject: Strong Support of SB 2996

Aloha Honorable Chairs and Members of the HWN and WLA Committees

I am in strong support of SB 2996 to prohibit the harvesting of aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes, regardless of the method of collection.

This issue goes beyond resource management; it directly affects Native Hawaiian cultural values, ecosystem health, and our collective ability to prepare for accelerating threats such as ocean acidification and climate change.

In Hawaiian culture, the ocean is not a commodity—it is a living ancestor and source of sustenance, knowledge, and identity. Pono Practices such as kilo (careful observation), mālama (to care for), and kuleana (responsibility) guide how we interact with marine resources. Reef fish are not merely decorative species; they are integral members of a balanced ecosystem that feeds our people, supports subsistence practices, and maintains the health of coral reefs.

Banning aquarium fishing affirms the cultural principle that some resources are too important to remove, especially when their loss affects the entire ecosystem and future generations.

I ask you humbly to please support SB 2996.

Mahalo

Cynthia Punihaole Kennedy

Kalaoa, North Kona, Hawai'i Island

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 2:43:49 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Anne Allison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony on SB2996

Please pass SB2996 out of committee!

In 2023 BLNR supported no collecting of reef fish for the aquarium trade. Yet DAR turned around and proposed large scale commercial extraction. How can this be? 1) Law makers/guardians are to be guided by constitutional statues of public trust to protect our land and resources (malama aina). 2) In 2017 after shutdown of collection an independent scientific study proved that the reef fish populations did not rebound. So monitoring of reef fish populations was reduced to once a year instead of 4-6X a year for the destruction to remain hidden longer!! 3). The fish lose, the reefs lose, tourists lose and residents lose as they do not benefit while bearing all the environmental and enforcement costs!!!! Soooooo. Who gains to suggest such blatantly poor legislation that hurts Hawaii, the ocean and our people???? Maybe the people at DAR that proposed this or the lawmakers that agree..... What are the conflicts of interest?

Anne Allison, Kihei, Maui

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 3:24:58 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marty Martins	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose the collection of reef fish for sale to aquariums and pet stores. One of my favorite snorkeling reefs had its entire population of Yellow Tang removed by commecial aquarium trappers. I'm ure that is the cade elsewhere as well. Please ban all trapping of fish for aquariums and pet stores.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 4:10:42 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Paul Montague	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable law makers, I support SB2996 as it seeks to prohibit the commercial taking of reef fish for commercial gains. Reef fish are important to the health of our coral reefs as they graze on algae. If the algae is not consumed by these fish, the corals can be damaged. Thank you for your efforts to protect our reefs.

February 8, 2026

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a resident of Hawai'i County and the State of Hawai'i, and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of SB2996. My partner and I moved to this island because of its extraordinary natural beauty and unique environmental resources.

We believe Hawai'i's marine life should be protected and preserved in its natural habitat, not removed for commercial aquarium collecting and exported elsewhere. Hawai'i's reef ecosystems are limited and fragile, and continued commercial collection threatens these public resources for the sake of private profit.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support SB2996 and end commercial aquarium collecting in Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

Joe Culbertson  
Kea'au, HI

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 4:22:34 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Linda Wright	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm supporting SB299. I support every effort we can make to save our oceans. All life on earth originated in the ocean. We need to change our priorities from profits to sustaining LIFE.

Sincerely,

Linda Wright

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 4:34:50 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lester Klungness	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Marine life is a valuable resource for the people of Hawaii, particularly the indigenous Hawaiians. Rules controlling the taking of marine organisms are very necessary. Human greed must be curtailed for the common good.. the same goes for all forms of sea harvesting of game fish, aquarium fish, mollusks, etc. Many important unique Hawaiian species have been driven to extinction. This must stop, by both Federal and State law.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 4:47:48 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Teri Corpuz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Teri Corpuz (Pukalani, Maui)

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 5:01:54 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nina Monasevitch	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I strongly support SB2996.**

Alarmingly, a recent **independent expert scientific analysis** of DAR’s own data confirms that following the 2017 court-ordered shutdown of the aquarium collection, **yellow tang populations failed to recover as biologically and historically expected.**

Ongoing **illegal poaching** for the aquarium trade, despite **four criminal convictions in the past five years involving at least ten industry members.**

The trade’s fundamental conflict with **local culture and Native Hawaiian values**, including pono fishing practices that limit take to what is truly needed.

The extraction of ocean wildlife for aquariums is inhumane, unsustainable and not pono! To help Hawaii’s coral reefs recover from bleaching, we need to protect and maintain a healthy population of the herbivorous fish that are essential to reef ecosystems.

Its inconsistency with **mālama ‘āina** and the State’s **constitutional public-trust obligation** to protect natural resources for present and future generations.

**Published cost-benefit analyses** showing residents receive **no public benefit** from the aquarium trade while bearing **all environmental and enforcement costs.**

Please also pass SB2996 out of committee.

Malama Pono,

Nina Monasevitch

Lihue, Kauai

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 5:09:50 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
hai on	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hai On

Kalopa, Honokaa, Hawaii Island

I, Hai On, represent my family and the Kawaihae Reef Organization. I strongly support SB2996, which would permanently ban commercial aquarium collecting for the pet trade statewide.

I have been following the Herculean efforts of citizens to ensure that the State of Hawaii makes the right decision to eliminate the wasteful and short-sighted practice of aquarium collecting in our waters.

It is time to pass this bill to protect our marine ecosystems for future generations.

Mahalo,

Hai On

Kawaihae Reef Organization

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 5:43:18 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
anita wintner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support banning aquarium fish collecting for good. Our reefs need our reef fish to clean the coral and to continue to populate. There have never been enough regulations in place for the collection. The residents of Hawaii want this aquarium collecting to stop now and forever. Anita Wintner Makena Maui Hawaii

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 5:46:08 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Wendy Noritake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Wendy Noritake, and I live in Kapaau, in North Kohala on the Big Island of Hawaii. I am a scuba diver, freediver, swimmer, photographer, and writer. I swim almost daily for the past ten years from Kapaa Park to Mahukona to Lapakahi. I've witnessed the decline in the numbers of reef fish as well as the destruction of coral in order to get the reef fish. I've seen boats and zodiacs who have come to our waters to take the fish. I know this because I had several places to photograph fish because they live in certain areas, and they are gone after seeing these boats in those areas.

The reef fish are special because many of them are endemic to Hawaii, found nowhere else on earth. They should and need to be protected as Hawaiian natural treasures so that generations of ocean lovers can see them and appreciate them. I've witnessed, observed, and written about their families or schools, their mates (mating for life) and their communication with each other. They have lives that are cut short when taken inhumanely for the aquariums. These fish are already under stress due to climate change, pollution, coral bleaching, predators, and humans.

Please support SB2996 to ban this hideous business which benefits a few at the sacrifice of thousands, maybe millions of these innocent, beautiful creatures. I love Hawaii and its natural resources, especially the marine animals that call this place home, and I want to see them thrive rather than decline or made extinct.

Thank you for considering an end to this practice.

Very much appreciated,

Wendy Noritake

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 6:38:13 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Patricia Richardson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I urge you to pass SB2996 to protect our reefs and reef life from commercial aquarium fishing. This practice is in direct conflict with environmental and Native Hawaiian values.

My name is Patricia Richardson. I live in Hilo, am a retired teacher from Waiakea High School and a volunteer at Mokupapapa Discovery Center in Hilo and a volunteer fish surveyor for REEF.org.

Thank you for reading my testimony.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 7:05:07 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carol Riccio	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments: I feel opening up Aquarium collection of reef fish will devastate Hawai'i's reefs which are already suffering greatly due to climate change killing coral. There is science behind that statement. And the repercussions of loss of reef are huge, including declining tourist activity and dollars, hurting Hawaiian culture, and causing more shore erosion and losing reef protection from wave action. Previous public input has repeatedly been overwhelmingly against aquarium collection of fish. Please pass SB2996 out of committee. Thank you for your time. Aloha, Carol Riccio Kihei, Maui, HI

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 7:11:32 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Deborah Wallace	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

it is abhorrent that we would allow commercial aquarium fishing. it has proven to be detrimental to the health of our reefs, and it is also detrimental to our tourism for the many people who come here to see our beautiful waters and our beautiful fish. there is zero benefit to the local population from this fishing, which is often done illegally and has a huge negative environmental impact.

the bycatch from this aquarium fishing is tossed to die and this count accounts for hundreds and hundreds of fish deaths a year

it is amazing to me that for the benefit of a very few the health of our coral reefs and of our ocean is sacrificed. please please vote to end this practice.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 10:50:37 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
David Hunt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong Support !

Please, once and for all, FINALLY - ban the cruelty and wasteful greed that is aquarium taking.

I have been speaking out against aquarium collecting for many years. Please, FINALLY pass this ban!

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:12:04 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Andrea Nandoskar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly support!

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/8/2026 11:32:40 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kimo Cashman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection consistent with the public trust and the needs of Hawai‘i’s residents, including Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners and the public at large.

Commercial aquarium fishing flies in the face of Hawai‘i’s constitutional public trust doctrine, which requires that our natural and cultural resources be used and conserved for the public good rather than private gain. But the aquarium collection industry has extracted and exported millions of specimens of public trust marine life—the vast majority of which die within a year after collection—for private (primarily out of state) profit.

At the same time, this commercial activity has diminished the ecological and cultural integrity of our reef systems, undermined the state’s food security and climate resilience, and degraded a cornerstone of our tourism-based economy. Not surprisingly, the majority of Hawai‘i residents, and Native Hawaiian subsistence communities in particular, support a ban on commercial aquarium collection.

While commercial aquarium collection has not been allowed for the better part of a decade, the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) has recently proposed rules that would reopen West Hawai‘i waters to commercial aquarium collection, claiming that they are mandated to do so under state law. Yet as DAR has recognized, agency rulemaking regulates how an activity operates, not whether the activity should be allowed. Accordingly, the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to decide whether this activity should be permitted at all.

Healthy coral reefs and ecosystems support food security, cultural and subsistence practices, and provide shoreline protection. In addition, on-reef tourism activities that depend on vibrant and healthy ecosystems generate approximately \$1.2 billion annually for the state.

Therefore, a statutory ban is critical to protect what is not only a major economic engine for the state, but a cornerstone of resilience and self-sufficiency for our present and future generations from ever-increasing extractive stressors placed on our marine environment.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Dr. Kim Cashman

Wahiawā, O‘ahu

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 12:18:25 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sylvie Madison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Position:** Support for this specific prohibition only

To the Committee,

I support the part of this bill that prohibits the commercial collection of reef wildlife for the aquarium pet trade.

Allowing commercial aquarium collection monetizes Hawaii's reefs for the benefit of a small number of commercial operators, and individuals, possibly foreign individuals also, and not for the benefit of the public as a whole. Hawaii's reefs should not be treated as a private commodity market by a select few.

Hands off the reef.

This testimony is in support of the commercial aquarium collection ban.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sylvie Madison

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 3:08:47 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elaine Losey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of SB2996

Aloha Senators,

My name is [Your Name], and I live in [Town], [Island]. I strongly support SB2996 to permanently ban commercial aquarium collecting in Hawai‘i.

Our reefs are living treasures, not commodities. Decades of aquarium collecting have depleted reef fish populations, disrupted ecosystems, and conflicted with Native Hawaiian values of pono fishing and mālama ‘āina. Even after years of closures, key species like yellow tang have not recovered as expected, while monitoring has been drastically reduced. This leaves our reefs vulnerable and our communities unheard.

Hawai‘i’s reefs belong to the people of Hawai‘i and to future generations, not to a private pet trade that provides no public benefit while imposing lasting environmental costs. The State has a constitutional duty to protect these resources, and SB2996 is a necessary and responsible step.

Please pass SB2996 out of committee and enact a permanent statewide ban on commercial aquarium collecting. Our reefs cannot wait.

Mahalo for your leadership and your commitment to protecting Hawai‘i’s natural heritage.

Respectfully,

Elaine Losey

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 4:45:42 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Maria Tiongco	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB2996. This should not even be up for consideration until/unless aquarium fishing is made legal again by the State.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 4:56:14 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marc Kinoshita	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

After allowing 20 years of aquarium fish collecting, i feel that the overwhelming evidence of it not being a good practice speaks for itself. For this reason I support a permanent ban on commercial aquarium fish collecting .

i humbly ask you to pass SB2996 out of committee.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 6:45:52 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lee Ashford	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB2996 and feel it shouldn't be considered for a vote until the ongoing work by the state pertaining to the aquarium fishery has been finalized with a clear outcome one way or another.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 6:46:54 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Florence Patrice Heller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly support the HB2996 fully banning aquarium fish collection in the state of Hawaii. I have personally witnessed the recovery of some species in Hawaii with the ban to the aquarium trade on the island of Hawaii however many species have never recovered in numbers. Habitat destruction, degradation and climate change have and will continue to have major impacts on our ocean environment. Those stressors we cannot immediately change however it is within our power to take away the biggest risk to the loss of our reef fish. When we ban the commercial collection of reef fishes that source of species depletion stops. This is a passionate issue and community conflict also will be lessened. Our natural resources are limited and precious. We need to protect them.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:18:07 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jody Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

- This bill resolves a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has not addressed.
- It raises a fundamental policy question about whether reef species held in public trust should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers.
- SB 2996 affirms that only the Legislature has the authority and responsibility to make this determination.
- It reflects Hawai‘i’s constitutional duty to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices.
- SB 2996 recognizes that these constitutional obligations are incompatible with continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.
- Healthy coral reefs generate over \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide essential ecosystem services such as shoreline protection and food security.
- SB 2996 establishes that a statutory ban would protect this economic engine, strengthen resilience, and preserve marine resources for future generations.
- It provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms nearshore reefs as public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection.
- The commercial aquarium industry has been inactive for five years due to litigation, making this an appropriate time to act without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to **pass SB 2996**.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

Jody Smith

East Honolulu 96825

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:29:41 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sherry A. Marek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Submitting testimony on this issue reminds one of: “It’s deja vu all over again.” -Yogi Berra

Who thinks it would be appropriate to issue permits to collect Pueo owlets or any other winged wildlife on Hawaii Island to be shipped off and sold as “pets”?

Let’s protect wildlife in the ocean, Hawaii’s reef fish, where they can live for 20+ years. These fish are not “pets” to be kept in aquarium tanks next to macrame and an 8-track cassette player.

Happy swimming,

Sherry A. Marek (Big Island resident)

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:33:47 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Melinda Menchetti	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please protect our fish and coral. I am an avid free diver and swimmer and have seen first hand how aquarium fishing has destroyed the fish population and some of our beautiful corals. There are many species of fish that are very hard to find now due to their desirability to aquarium owners. The health of the corals and fish populations of Hawaii are a major part of our environment and also a main attraction to tourists. Please protect our reefs by banning fish collection and enforcing this new law.

Mahalo,

Melinda Menchetti

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:46:35 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
leah	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the prohibition on harvesting aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes.

Our coral reefs are among the most vulnerable and essential ecosystems on Earth. They are already under extraordinary stress from warming oceans, acidification, pollution, disease, and physical destruction. To continue removing wild fish from these systems—especially for nonessential, ornamental use—further compromises ecosystems that are already struggling to survive.

Reef fish are not decorative objects. They play critical roles in maintaining the health and balance of coral ecosystems: grazing algae, cycling nutrients, supporting coral growth, and sustaining complex food webs. When fish are removed, even in small numbers, the ecological consequences ripple outward—weakening reef resilience and accelerating collapse.

The argument that aquarium harvesting is “low impact” ignores cumulative effects. Coral reefs are not isolated systems with excess capacity; they are interconnected, delicately balanced living communities. Removing fish from stressed reefs is akin to removing organs from a patient already in intensive care.

It is also important to recognize that commercial aquarium harvesting serves a luxury market, not a survival need. No one requires wild-caught reef fish to live. By contrast, the reefs themselves are essential—to fisheries, coastal protection, biodiversity, cultural heritage, and the stability of marine life as a whole.

We are living in a moment that calls for restraint, not extraction. Protection, not entitlement. Stewardship, not commodification.

If we continue to treat living ecosystems as resources to be harvested for aesthetic pleasure, we will lose them—not gradually, but abruptly. Future generations will inherit aquariums filled with plastic replicas and oceans emptied of life.

This prohibition is not radical; it is responsible. It reflects an understanding that conservation must evolve with ecological reality. Leaving fish in the ocean—where they belong—is one of the simplest and most effective actions we can take to protect coral reefs and the life systems that depend on them.

I urge you to support this prohibition and affirm a commitment to protecting living reefs over commercial exploitation.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Leah Lamb

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:47:14 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Merritt Robinson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I firmly believe that taking a fish for the aquarium trade is detrimental to the long-term health of the reefs in Hawaii.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:55:04 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Frederick Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and Members of the Committees,**

**My name is Frederick Smith, and I am a master’s student at UH Hilo focused on marine science and policy. I live in the Kealakekua ahupua’a in South Kona, Hawai’i Island.**

**I strongly support SB2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on the commercial collection of marine life for the aquarium trade.**

**The industry has historically removed significant numbers of reef fish, including ecologically important herbivores, weakening reef resilience and disrupting Native Hawaiian subsistence practices while providing minimal benefit to the State. Given these impacts, communities across Hawai’i have repeatedly opposed reopening the aquarium trade. Allowing the trade to resume would be inconsistent with Hawai’i’s constitutional public trust obligations.**

**Although commercial aquarium collection has not been permitted for nearly a decade due to court rulings, the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) has recently proposed rules that could reopen this industry, citing obligations under existing statute. However, agency rulemaking determines *how* an activity is conducted, not whether it should be allowed. Only the Legislature can resolve this longstanding policy question by affirming that Hawai’i’s reef wildlife should be managed as public trust resources rather than export commodities.**

**A statutory ban would also enable the Department of Land and Natural Resources to focus its limited staff capacity on urgent priorities such as climate resilience, subsistence resource protection, enforcement, and community-based management, where communities across the pae ‘āina are already urgently seeking support.**

**For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committees to pass SB2996.**

**Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.**

**Frederick Smith**

**82-5996 Napo'opo'o Road**

**Captain Cook (Ka'awaloa), HI 96704**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:55:19 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Joshua DeMello	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senators,

As a Hawaii citizen, I am concerned with the use of a blanket prohibition by the legislature as a means of resource management. The state has a Department of Land and Natural Resources and a Division of Aquatic Resources that are tasked with managing resources. The use of the Chapter 95 process allows for more transparency, greater public involvement, and the opportunity to discuss REAL management tools for the aquarium fishery.

The legislature should note WHY DAR and DLNR should not be tasked with this issue. It should also prove WHY such an extreme tool is being applied. Are the fishes in danger of going extinct? is there a large depletion? why can't other management tools be used such as bag limits, size limits, area closures, etc?

The legislature is reacting to the whims of extremists that do not have the patience for actual management of this fishery. Full disclosure, I am not a fan of the fishery either, but I am a fan of the Chapter 85 process. The use of a legislative ban on our resources is akin to using a hammer on a screw. It may work but is the wrong tool for the job.

I propose the bill being amended to task the DLNR/DAR to look at options for stricter management of the aquarium fishery, including prohibitions on taking food fishes, potential bag limits, and closed areas.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 8:01:02 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jon Mitchell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am dumbfounded that we are even having to codify the preservation of natural resources and living things native to Hawaii. With all the regulations about what we can bring back to the mainland as a traveller, the idea of harvesting native animals for use in a man-made environment is just a bad idea.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 8:31:02 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Laura K. Legge	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

IT'S TIME TO END THE TAKING OF OUR DESPERATELY NEEDED HAWAIIAN REEF FISH ONCE AND FOR ALL! THE REEF FISH ARE NEEDED ON OUR REEFS, NOT IN SOME DOCTOR'S OFFICE IN PEORIA, PLEASE DO THE RIGHT THING AND BAN THIS TERRIBLE PRACTICE BY THE PET TRADE ONCE AND FOR ALL!

Mahalo nui!

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 8:25:32 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Pauline Fiene	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please vote yes on this bill to finally stop the commercial take of Hawaii's ocean wildlife for the enjoyment of people who do not even live in Hawaii. We all know that Hawaii's reefs are facing numerous threats from runoff, ocean warming, etc. More than ever we need these fish where they belong, on the reef, where they play their critically important roles in the ecosystem.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 8:42:43 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jay R Lambert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am testifying on behalf of the one of Hawaii's most valuable and important

treasures--our tropical fish. I strongly support SB2996, hoping our senators do the right thing and permanently ban commercial tropical fish collecting, a business that benefits a handful of people but removes thousands of fish from our reefs to be put in aquariums where most die within a year--a terrible waste of a precious part of Hawaii. Let the fish remain in their natural habitat and provide a wonderful visual experience for visitors and residents alike who snorkel and SCUBA dive in our beautiful coastal waters.

Mahalo for your consideration..

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 8:51:24 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cheryl King	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

This testimony is in strong support of SB2996 to enact a statewide ban on commercial aquarium collection for the pet trade.

I am a quarter-century Maui resident and marine biologist who has seen far too many negative impacts on our coral reefs. I'm deeply saddened that this legislative process is happening again- it was already concluded that this wasteful, cruel trade that only "benefits" a few individuals was only adding more intense stress to our already degraded coral reef environments. We need every fish on the reef to stay on the reef!

Please realize the importance of your decision. There's absolutely nothing good that will come of allowing the aquarium trade to steal our fish. Hawai'i needs to be seen as a proponent for environmentally friendly actions, not bullied by commercial interests that negatively impact our future.

Mahalo,

~Cheryl King, MSc.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 9:06:12 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jenny Yagodich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support for SB2996

Our fragile, threatened reefs should not be a supply chain for the global aquarium trade, especially when it involves taking juvenile fish that are essential to healthy, resilient reef ecosystems. These fish belong on our reefs, not shipped around the world for entertainment.

Removing hundreds of thousands of fish, especially juveniles, disrupts natural balance, weakens reef resilience, and harms the very ecosystems supporting culture, food security, and tourism. This greedy practice benefits a small commercial industry while putting long-term costs on the public and our environment.

If there is demand for aquarium fish, they should be farmed, not taken from the wild. Aquaculture is a viable alternative that does not sacrifice Hawai'i's reefs.

Please pass SB2996 and permanently end commercial aquarium fishing in Hawai'i.

Mahalo

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 9:06:15 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jane Taylor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is clear that the short term economic benefits to a few from aquarium fishing are not worth the longterm degradation that has an impact on ALL and on the ecosystem. I support banning aquarium fishing entirely.

I'm Linda Sparks living in Kula on Maui. I've worked as a underwater photographer for over 40yrs. In that time I've seen collectors devastation of the fish. We need all our fish to help our reefs to survive. I strongly support permanently banning commercial aquarium collecting!

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 9:29:58 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Susie Davis	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Feb 9, 2026

Dear Senators,

As a resident of Kapaau, Hi and an ardent supporter of Hawai‘i having healthy oceans, coral, and fisheries, I strongly encourage you to end the aquarium trade in Hawai‘i.

Our oceans and fisheries are already in peril due to warming, acidification, overfishing and pollution. We have not seen a full recovery of our corals from the 2013-2014 bleaching event, and the most recent NOAA study on coral health states that coral cover is still about 30% lower than before the bleaching. Tropical fish are stewards of the reef. They help keep coral reef ecosystems healthy and in balance. By removing these fish, coral reefs get out of balance and become more susceptible to stress from warming oceans, bleaching, and ocean acidification. Keeping fish on the reef is essential for healthy and resilient coral reef ecosystems. As protectors of Hawai‘i’s unique and limited natural resources, DLNR needs to stop the extraction of Hawai‘i’s reef fish by the exploitive pet trade industry.

In Kohala, Big Island, where I reside, subsistence fishing is an integral part of Native Hawaiian culture. The Aquarium industry serves markets outside of Hawai‘i where huge profits are being made from Hawai‘i’s precious natural resources with no reciprocation to the many residents, in particular Native Hawaiians. Extracting reef fish for the pet trade industry is not consistent with Native Hawaiian subsistence, cultural, or religious practices, nor is it consistent with being protectors of our precious marine environment.

At this pivotal turning point in the history of coral reefs we must all learn to live sustainably and support strategic management to secure our future and protect our resources. I strongly object to any further compromise or negotiation that enables a trade that is a direct threat to our marine environment and our indigenous culture.

Sincerely,

Susie Davis

Kapaau, HI 96755

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 9:30:06 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Amy Gillum	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Amy Gillum and I live in Kailua Kona on Hawaii. I am a scuba diver and have been diving our beautiful waters for years. Over those years it has become obvious the number of our reef fish has markedly decreased. I believe the decrease is directly attributed to aquarium collecting which should be permanently banned. Not only does the practice deliver zero benefits to the public but it is inconsistent with the state's constitutional public-trust obligation to protect natural resources. It is unbelievable to me that this issue is still unresolved and all of those of us that want to protect the oceans have to continue to fight this horrendous practice.

Please legislators, do the right thing and vote to malama aina once and for all. Pass SB2996 out of committee. Ban aquarium collecting forever!

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 9:34:20 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Evin Lambert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As the third generation of a family of ocean sports enthusiasts in Hawaii, and a graduate of West Hawaii Explorations Academy whose primary project my senior year was monitoring reef fish populations at Kahaluu Bay in Kona, I strongly urge our State legislators to **pass SB2996 out of committee** and protect our reefs for future generations!

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 9:36:13 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Steve Goo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

**I strongly support SB2996**, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than **\$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue** and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to **pass SB2996**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Steve Goo

Honolulu, Oahu



**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 9:42:38 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Diane Peters-Nguyen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai, I am in favor of banning the gathering of aquarium fish after having learned of the difficulty in propagation of tropicals or aquarium fish in captivity. Thus, commercial gathering and depletion of our wild stocks in Hawaiian waters is not sustainable and must be immediately banned. Hawaiians of old had strict "Kapu" laws on harvesting all species of fish. Thank you for moving forward to prohibit this.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 9:48:50 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jo Alexander	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**!! Please move forward on passing the legislation 2996 SB RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, Specifically regarding the Permanent Ban on Private Aquarium Collection on Hawaiian waters. Not doing so will continue the current permanent depletion and devastation of the wildlife on Hawaiian reefs. The passage of this legislation will make possible healthy habitat for ocean wildlife for generations to come. Please do the right thing, and protect our reefs and ocean ecosystem by voting to Permanently Ban the Aquarium collection trade in Hawaiian Waters!**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 9:53:39 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gil Riviere	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Good bill. Please vote yes.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:12:06 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
susan hassett	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom it may concern:

The fact that the state of Hawaii would condone the collection and catching of reef fish for decorations? This is unnecessary, abhorrent, and unless this company is willing to and restore 1/2 mile of reef in the area for every one fish that they catch, and do the restoration before they even remove one fish..then this is a poor Bill to have in this state or anywhere for that matter.

I therefore oppose..

We as a civilization need to stop putting animals on parade and putting them in boxes and cages. Someday we might be almost extinct and will be in a box or cage for some other civilization to look at.

With kuleana..

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:03:37 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Klayton Kubo	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Oppose

Klayton Kubo

Waimea, Kaua'i

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:15:24 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Luci Price	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I oppose SB 2996.**

**As commercial aquarium fishing is not currently legal in Hawai‘i and the possible reopening of the fishery is still under formal state review, it is premature to debate or advance this bill. It seems the more appropriate course would be to allow the state's existing regulatory and review process to conclude before considering new legislation. For these reasons, this bill should be deferred at this time.**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:15:48 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kelsie Kuniyoshi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,**

**I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.**

**This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.**

**Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.**

**Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.**

**A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because**

**the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.**

**For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.**

**Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,**

**Kelsie Kuniyoshi**

**Pālolo, O‘ahu**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:20:07 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Donna Sue Shepherd	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo for all the good work you do ongoingly to protect and preserve our precious Hawaii. All the way to Papahanaumokuakea!! Having lived on the Big Island, Kaiua Kona, for 36 years between diving, snorkleing, hiking and more I see first hand the deminishment of natural habitats and different species. Please, oh Please take 100% pride in our paradise always.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:23:45 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tina Wildberger	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs and Committee Members,

**\*\*\*Stop Reef Rape\*\*\***

Your time and consideration on and for this import issue is appreciated. It is so important. Hawaii's reefs and our adjacent economy are under attack. We cannot depend on DLNR nor BLNR nor DoCARE to fulfill their duties to protect our natural resources. It is up to the legislature to restrain the exploitive practices these state divisions are offering, at a minimum, tacit approval and sometimes overt cooperation for: our reefs' decimation.

I encourage you not to carve out exceptions for the Maui Aquarium. They can't keep marine life alive. They had permits and came back to ask for and maddeningly were granted, increased take. It's not sustainable.

Time is truly running out. Hold state agencies accountable and stop the barbaric practice of plucking marine life off of our already stressed reefs.

You know how it's rude for a tourist to pluck gardenias off of some neighbor's gardenia bush because if everyone did it, there wouldn't be flowers for anyone else to enjoy? Same goes for our reef fish. Leave them in place for others to enjoy. Read the statistics, too many die before they even make it to market. Notwithstanding the harm created by disrupting delicate reef ecosystems.

**Don't let these thugs** - and I do mean thugs, **continue to rape and pillage our reefs** for profit. There are plenty of other respectable ways to earn a living.

Mahalo.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:26:04 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Richard	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support this bill. Prohibit the harvesting of aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes, regardless of the method of collection.

You know it is the right thing to do. So lets get it done. Do it.

Richard Bodie

Hāwī

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:31:23 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
madison kearsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill

## Written Testimony in Support of S.B. 2996

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Committee Members:

This testimony supports S.B. 2996 and the State’s constitutional obligation to protect aquatic resources held in the public trust, as reflected in the Legislature’s recognition that environmental protections are enshrined in the Hawai‘i State Constitution.

The attached evidentiary record reflects that a substantial portion of marine life collected for commercial aquarium purposes — including marine life collected at the State’s largest privately owned aquarium and largest permit holder, the Maui Ocean Center — does not survive captivity despite regulatory oversight. The record further reflects that mortality is not merely incidental, but a foreseeable and recurring outcome associated with the practice at this facility as structured in recent years, including a documented mortality rate exceeding fifty percent (68% in 2021–22 and 58% in 2022–23) at the time the attached data were collected.

Notably, while the take of aquatic life is regulated through permitting, the record indicates there are no regulatory limits on animal mortality after collection.

Direct take is not the sole impact. Capture, confinement, transport, and prolonged holding concentrate biological stressors and create conditions consistent with pathogen collection and transmission risk, establishing exposure pathways not present in open reef systems. Documented bacterial and parasitic infections shortly after capture underscore this structural concern.

Where collected organisms cannot be safely returned to the ocean due to health or contamination risks, mortality becomes the default outcome. Where post-collection holding and water-handling practices create conditions consistent with marine pathogen risk, such exposure may be externalized to the surrounding marine environment, irrespective of intent.

At a time when Hawai‘i’s reefs face compounding pressure from climate change, land-based pollution, and habitat degradation, the natural system cannot reasonably be expected to sustain the cumulative load of both ecosystem extraction and aquarium waste pollution loading associated with artificial simulation. The Constitution does not require the State to optimize for industry continuity; it requires the State to prevent impairment of public trust resources.

Accordingly, S.B. 2996 functions as a preventive measure where existing oversight mechanisms have not ensured outcomes consistent with the State’s public-trust duties.

The question before the Legislature is whether the State may continue to permit a practice whose ordinary operation produces predictable loss, avoidable risk, and cumulative degradation of public trust resources.

S.B. 2996 answers that question correctly.

Respectfully submitted,  
Travis Liggett

## **Evidentiary Record Supporting Mortality and Pathogen Risk in Commercial Aquarium Collection Practices**

- **Article Reference (p. 4):** Pells, J.D. (2024, December 15). *Maui Ocean Center touts marine conservation, but nonprofit says it repeatedly violates fish-taking permits with high mortality rates*. Hawai‘i Journalism Initiative / Maui Now.
- **Primary Fish Collection Data** (Appendix, p. 32): *Maui Ocean Center Annual Special Activity Permit Collection Report (2021–2022)*, including mortality tables and species-level outcomes.
- **Purpose of Submission:** Compliant evidentiary reference supporting legislative testimony regarding mortality outcomes, ecosystem extraction, and pathogen transmission risk associated with commercial aquarium collection practices.

*Page numbers correspond to the continuous pagination of this combined submission.*



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**Hawai'i Journalism Initiative**

# **Maui Ocean Center touts marine conservation, but nonprofit says it repeatedly violates fish-taking permits with high mortality rates**

By [JD Pells](#)

December 15, 2024 · 7:03 AM HST



*The only privately owned aquarium in Hawai'i also holds the largest aquarium fish collection permit in the state. JD Pells/Hawai'i Journalism Initiative*

In 1998, the \$20 million Maui Ocean Center, the only privately owned aquarium in Hawai'i, opened with a mission that continues to this day of conservation and stewardship of marine life.

Its current website, under the heading "Mālama (Stewardship)," says all animals under its care have been collected under a special permit with the state Division of Aquatic Resources.

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But the [nonprofit For the Fishes](#), which conducts courtesy reviews of fish-taking permits for the state, said it has found that the Maui Ocean Center has repeatedly violated these annual permits over the years, and that the state has allowed them to do so with minimal consequences.

For the Fishes Director Rene Umberger said the nonprofit's compliance review of the ocean center's [2022-23 special activity permit](#) determined there were 91 instances of improper collection from the ocean, including 11 the state also identified. The collected wildlife also experienced a mortality rate of more than 50% within a year of capture, she said.

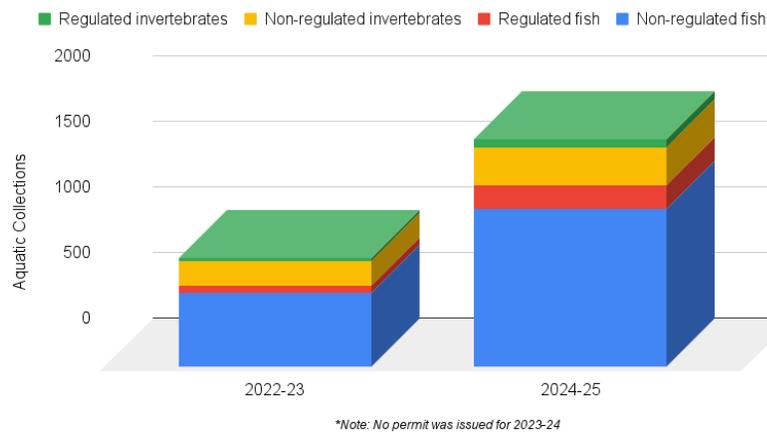
But instead of the Division of Aquatic Resources cracking down on the center — and

addressing the 118 recommendations made by the nonprofit to deal with the collection issues — the state agency in June renewed the ocean center’s permit. And, it did so with more favorable conditions, Umberger said.

[This year’s permit](#) more than doubled the allowable fish collection to 1,381 — the largest permit of its kind in the state — after a one-year gap in renewal during 2023-24, which the Division of Aquatic Resources attributed to a backlog.

The permit also included a new “opportunistic collection” clause that allows Maui Ocean Center to collect non-regulated marine life without prior permission and seek approval afterward. These activities would otherwise be illegal, according to the Division of Aquatic Resources.

Permitted Collections for Maui Ocean Center (2022-23 vs 2024-25)



The Division of Aquatic Resources explained in a recent email that the permit needed to be more “realistic to the needs of a large public aquarium,” and that opportunistic collections empower Maui Ocean Center to build its life-like displays while still providing the agency with the ability to provide oversight.

But Inga Gibson, the former director of the Humane Society of the United States, says this relaxed regulation sets a “dangerous precedent” for other Hawai‘i aquariums within the division’s jurisdiction.

Both Umberger and Gibson argue that opportunistic collections can be exploited as a loophole to bypass longstanding violations. And both have said the agency is “bending over backwards to give the Maui Ocean Center a pass.”

The aquarium and the state both say this isn’t the case, although they both agree there have been some issues with collecting marine animals over the years.

“As the state rules regarding ocean animal welfare evolve, sometimes drastically, we have been working directly with the DLNR and the Department of Aquatic Resources to improve

communication, close gaps, and address missteps,” said Maui Ocean Center Marketing Director Mark Matthews.

He said with guidance from the ocean center’s cultural advisor, Dane Maxwell, a comprehensive plan has been enacted to address and improve its processes to ensure actions are culturally appropriate and sustainable, leading to the renewal of the aquarium’s special activity permit this year.

## **THE START: ALLEGATIONS OF A RUSHED OPENING**

Umberger claims a pattern of the state letting Maui Ocean Center off the hook dates to the 1998 opening of the aquarium, which is owned by [Israeli corporation Coral World International](#).

The Maui Ocean Center’s website says entrepreneur and philanthropist Morris Khan, who in the 1970s recognized that fragile marine ecosystems needed protection, partnered with renowned reef biologist David Fridman to create Coral World — which has evolved into an international operation with marine parks worldwide, including on Maui.

In a [2009 email](#), [Bradley Tarr, a former curator](#)

[at the Maui Ocean Center](#), wrote that the rush to open the aquarium resulted in significant mortality of the collected marine life.

“The MOC was in such a hurry to meet its opening date that the paint from the larger tanks barely had time to dry before organisms were placed in them,” he said in his email to Robin Newbold, a former colleague of Umberger who had asked for background on the damaged reefs closest to the aquarium.

Tarr’s email continues: “Many large coral colonies died initially and were discarded at the seawall of the (Mā’alaea) harbor; very depressing. The same fate for fishes; large trash cans full of fishes were put back on the Boston Whaler and dumped at sea. Clearly there was a toxicity issue causing the mass mortality.”

Tarr also said in that email he was concerned about the over-collecting of marine life, and was instructed to fabricate reports about those collections.

“As curator, I was responsible for documenting all collections, including date, location, type, method and quantity,” Tarr said. “Although the total collection of fishes and corals far

exceeded the total amount allowed by the permit, ownership and upper management instructed me to revise the annual report to meet full compliance.”

In the email, Tarr attributed the aquarium’s over-collection to a “disrespect for the terms and conditions of the scientific collection permit issued by the Department of Land and Natural Resources.” He subsequently reported these infractions to the department and left the aquarium. Tarr did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

The Maui Ocean Center’s present-day general manager, Tapani Vuori, who came on board in 2002, said Thursday that he does not know if Tarr’s accounts are true, but if they are, the onus was on Tarr, not on him or the current leadership at Maui Ocean Center.

Matthews, who also joined Maui Ocean Center years after the alleged incidents, said it’s irrelevant to conflate them with Maui Ocean Center’s current practices.

“It sounds like if something happened, it was addressed and then it was repaired, and now we’re on the other side of that,” Matthews said in an interview Thursday.

Regardless, Tarr's letter to the state Department of Land and Natural Resources has shaped the aquarium's collection permit for the past two decades by accelerating the terms and conditions put in place for future special activity permits for aquariums in Hawai'i.

In a Nov. 15 email to the Hawai'i Journalism Initiative, the Division of Aquatic Resources said as a result of that letter the Maui Ocean Center's permits became "the most restrictive and required the most notification and oversight of any permit in the state."

The division also says it has had to update and change aquarium permits over the years to find a balance that allows it to strictly oversee large educational aquarium facilities while providing enough flexibility to the aquariums to be able to function. The division says its philosophy on evaluating fish collections is to find the best outcome for the state and protect aquatic resources to a practical degree, as outlined in Hawai'i Revised Statutes [Chapter 343](#).

But Umberger said the division is bending over backward to enable the aquarium to be in compliance with the permits. She provided a

separate [email](#) obtained via a public records request, in which the state suggested “revisions” be made to comply with the 2022-23 special activity permit. An April email from the Division of Aquatic Resources advised Maui Ocean Center curator Chris Keller to revise the annual collection report, providing justifications for unauthorized collections to ensure compliance.

The email reads: “If you cannot find any mention of these red highlighted ones on any of the spreadsheets, can you provide the reason for why they were collected — e.g. it could be collection error — you thought those species were listed on the request spreadsheet, or you thought those amount or life-stages were listed on the request spreadsheet — or I’m not sure if some were accepted as donations from other institutions — i.e. you weren’t planning on collecting but they opportunistically became available through a donation?”

To spur the Department of Land and Natural Resources, which oversees aquatic resources, to act on collection violations namely in the pet aquarium trade, a group of conservationists that includes Umberger [petitioned](#) in October for a review of the regulatory framework. They

urged the state Board of Land and Natural Resources to clarify its authority to prohibit commercial aquarium collection statewide and deny permits for such activities.

For the Fishes also is calling for the immediate revoking of the Maui Ocean Center’s [special activity permit](#) and a review by the state board, warning that without stronger oversight, the future of Maui’s reefs could be at greater risk.

### **THE PERMITS: COLLECTION VIOLATIONS**



*About 400,000 people visit the Maui Ocean Center each year. JD Pells/Hawai'i Journalism Initiative*

Since January 2022, For The Fishes has provided feedback on 12 special activity permits related to “aquarium purposes” for the Department of Land and Natural Resources. While some of its feedback is integrated into

new permits, the issuance of a permit is not contingent upon approval by the nonprofit, the Division of Aquatic Resources said.

In March of 2024, For The Fishes began its review of the Maui Ocean Center's compliance with its 2022-23 permit by analyzing the aquarium's 2022-23 collection report and obtaining related emails through public records requests. The nonprofit concluded there were [91 instances of improper collection](#): 34 unauthorized species, 41 excessive quantities of certain species, and 16 fish collected at unauthorized life stages. These alleged infractions constituted 35% of the collections made during this period.

The state had flagged just [11 violations](#) (taking seven blacklisted species of regulated organisms: redlip parrotfish, stareye parrotfish, bullethead parrotfish, palenose parrotfish, blacktip shark and two bluefin trevally; and taking unauthorized amounts of species of regulated organisms: two manybar goatfish and two blacktip reef sharks).

For the Fishes sent its findings to the state. In an email dated April 24, the state's coordinator of Special Activity Permits, aquatic biologist Catherine Gewecke, responded by thanking

For The Fishes for flagging “issues with the data” and saying it had addressed the “mistakes” with Maui Ocean Center.

On Aug. 13, the state issued the ocean center a [notice of permit violation](#), characterizing all of Maui Ocean Center’s 11 official violations as “mis-collections” attributed to “human error.” It did not cite Maui Ocean Center for any of the infractions alleged by For the Fishes.

The Division of Aquatic Resources said it addressed these 11 mistakes by integrating additional clarifying language into the permit conditions and updated existing conditions for the Maui Ocean Center’s 2024-2025 renewal. The division said the remaining 80 potential violations flagged by For the Fishes were for non-regulated organisms, which “would not require a permit in themselves.”

For the Fishes argues that collecting unauthorized fish went against the terms of the permit, which makes these collections illegal per [Hawaii Administrative Rules](#): “When the Maui Ocean Center collects marine animals not specifically authorized under the special activity permit, those collections are illegal, regardless of whether they involve ‘regulated’ species,” Umberger said.

Matthews said the nonprofit misrepresented the number of violations, which “is unfortunate and disappointing.” He said to remedy its “small number of unintentional mis-collections,” the center has implemented corrective measures that include additional training about how to identify the species and age of fish.

After the Maui Ocean Center’s latest special activity permit was issued, Umberger said she adopted a more vigilant approach to assess the [collection report under the aquarium’s permit in 2021](#). She said that report revealed an even greater number of unauthorized takings, [500 violations](#), accounting for 62% of all ocean collections that year.

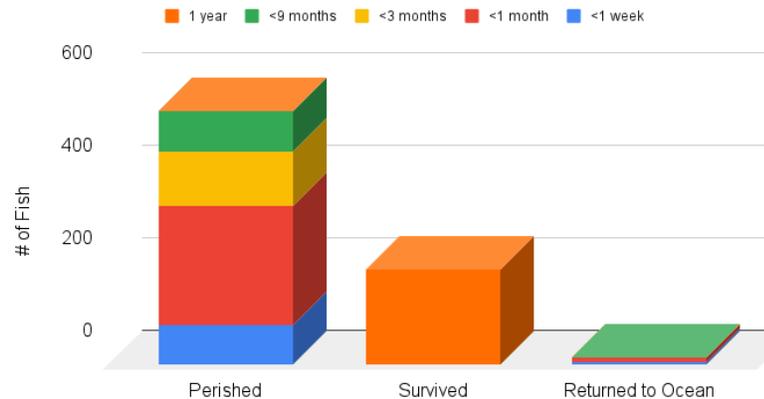
Her analysis concluded the aquarium illegally took 224 fish across 41 unauthorized species, exceeded collection limits by 264, and captured 12 fish at unauthorized life stages.

The documents confirm a pattern by the Maui Ocean Center of a “total disregard for the terms and conditions” of its permits and “appalling mortality rates that go hand in hand with their complete disrespect for the animals under their care,” Umberger said.

## THE DATA: HIGH MORTALITY RATES

### Fish Fate at Maui Ocean Center (2021-22)

Based on data from Maui Ocean Center's collection report & analysis by For the Fishes



Maui Ocean Center collected 802 fishes in 2021-22. By the end of the permit year, 548 (68%) had died and 14 (less than 2%) had been returned to the ocean.

Unlike fish collection, there are no regulatory limits on animal mortality at the Maui Ocean Center. The aquarium has acknowledged, however, that its mortality rates exceed the norm.

In a “Potential Permit Violation List” [document](#) Maui Ocean Center sent earlier this year to the Division of Aquatic Resources in response to mitigating mortalities, the aquarium estimated that the normal mortality rate for animals collected for public aquariums is between 20% and 30% within a year, and that it’s usually related to transport.

The Maui Ocean Center reported its animal mortality rate was double that from 2021-2023, and the animals were transported only short distances and not flown in planes.

While a “standard” mortality rate is up for debate and still being defined by the Department of Land and Natural Resources, Matthews of the Maui Ocean Center said the typical mortality rate often bandied around is 43%. Over the last two permit years, the aquarium’s mortality was still higher than that.

The reported mortality rates for fish and invertebrates within the first year of collection was [68% in 2021-22](#) and [58% in 2022-23](#). Most deaths occurred within a month of capture and were not attributed to transport, according to the aquarium.

The [700 newly collected animals that perished from 2021 to 2023](#) died of various causes, including age, predation, failing to eat in captivity and contracting bacterial infections or parasitic infections shortly after arrival, the collection reports said.



*One of three saddle wrasse died within a year of capture in the most recent collection report. JD Pells/Hawai'i Journalism Initiative*

Matthews said some fish that died had arrived injured or sick. For instance, a blacktip reef shark labeled as “dead on arrival” had been treated in Maui Ocean Center’s quarantine area for an ulua fishing hook injury that ultimately led to its death two weeks later.

Vuori said the mortality rate figure misrepresents the nuances of the aquarium because “dead on arrival” had been the only animal-death designation in the Division of Aquatic Resources identification methodology up until 2023.

“Presented at face value, it looks like 50% just died through our mishandling,” Vuori said. “We are working with the state to calibrate this so it’s a more accurate representation of what is

actually happening. It should be available for the public to see and, ultimately, the public needs to decide what is acceptable for them.”

But Umberger suspects that many of the mortality cases stem from poor husbandry. She suggested that the aquarium may lack motivation to protect fish that are collected for free and without the risk of penalties.

Collection reports show the Maui Ocean Center also continually collects a multitude of fish species despite a well-documented history of mortality in captivity.

Among the unique species in this category are spotted boxfish. The square-bodied, slow-moving fish rely on specific reef habitats to thrive. According to *For the Fishes*, they should not be collected due to their complex dietary needs and sensitivity to water conditions.

Records show that out of the 11 spotted boxfish collected in 2021–22 — nine over the permitted limit — seven died, two were returned to the sea sick, and one had missing data. Despite a zero percent success rate, the next year four more boxfish were collected from Mā‘alaea, two without authorization.

None survived.



A marine snail known as a nudibranch crawls across a reef. *Photo: Joe Belanger/Envato Elements*

Nudibranchs, often called “sea slugs,” also are known to [fare poorly in captivity](#) but are not listed as a restricted species in the permit. Matthews says, because of their ability to serve as “entry points” for many people, the “awe and wonder attached,” significance of nudibranchs in the ecosystem and education possibilities are worth the collection. In 2022-2023, all but one nudibranch — collected by the Maui Ocean Center to be put on display — died.

“The team is well aware of the challenges associated with certain species,” said Maui Ocean Center curator Chris Keller in an email.

“However, these decisions are made in consultation with marine biologists, veterinarians, and specialists to weigh the benefits of education, research, and conservation against the challenges of their care.”

For species known to have higher mortality rates, the ocean center implements “specialized care protocols, including acclimation procedures, advanced tank setups, and monitoring to improve survival outcomes,” This method contributes to a broader understanding and potential improvements in husbandry practices globally, Keller said.

“While mortality for some species is higher, the larger program’s conservation and educational value remain significant,” he said.

Matthews said For the Fishes’ opinion of its husbandry’s quality is “willfully negligent and harmful.”

He touted the aquarium’s highly skilled, educated and experienced staff, saying some have double master’s degrees in marine biology and others have been in the field for more than 30 years.

“It is important to note that we are talking about the mortality of a small number of fish introduced within their first year,” Matthews said. “We have over 84 exhibits ... and over 2,000 animals of over 240 species that thrive under our care.”



*A yellow tang hovers in the corner at one of the darker tanks of Maui Ocean Center’s “Living Reef” exhibit on Oct. 26, 2024. JD Pells/Hawai’i Journalism Initiative*

## **THE FUTURE: WILL FISH COLLECTION PRACTICES CHANGE?**

Umberger has wrestled with the state to curb commercial fish collectors for over a decade.

Fish collectors in Hawai’i used to be the [third-largest aquarium supplier](#) in the nation. But that began to change when Umberger lobbied

for fish extraction regulations that led to strict Maui County [ordinances](#) being passed in 2010 and 2011. This all but ended the aquarium fish trade in Maui Nui.

But Umberger wanted to expand the prohibition to all of Hawai'i. In 2014, she was documenting fish collection underwater on the Big Island [when a fish-collector pulled the air regulator from her mouth at 50 feet deep](#). This incident led to her being the plaintiff in a successful [lawsuit against the state](#) that initially lost in lower courts. The Supreme Court in 2017 ordered a stop to the commercial collection of aquarium fish in Hawai'i pending an [environmental review](#).

Compared to the larger fish trade, Umberger acknowledges that the Maui Ocean Center's yearly collection numbers are relatively small. However, she believes the focus should be on protecting Maui's rapidly degrading coastal ecosystems, which are threatened by concentrated fish collections on the same reefs.

According to the latest collection report, about 46% of the fish lack locational data, making it difficult to assess the full impact. Among the remaining fish, Mā'alaea Bay, the nearest to

the Maui Ocean Center, was the most common collection site, accounting for 22% of all specimens.

“What I noticed from the spreadsheet was how heavily they were hitting certain places,” Umberger said. “That’s where the impact would be most significant.”



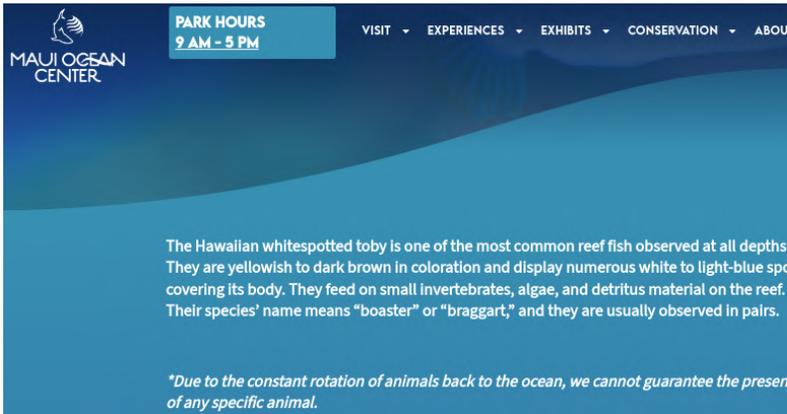
For the Fishes executive director and founder Ren Umberger has been instrumental in the passage o

two Maui County ordinances that have restricted the aquarium pet trade. *Courtesy photo*

The Maui Ocean Center, which is visited by about 400,000 people each year, said it also cares about ecological consequences. It hosts numerous educational events each year, is heavily involved in islandwide conservancy and rehabilitation efforts, and employs Maui residents, many of whom are passionate about marine conservation, sustainability and advocacy.

This year, it was voted the [7th best aquarium in the country](#) by USA Today readers.

But Umberger said the high mortality rates contradict Maui Ocean Center's position as a conservation hub. And both Umberger and Gibson have criticized the way the Maui Ocean Center presents information, with Umberger adding it would be a shame that the Maui aquarium could potentially fracture its public trust.



*Maui Ocean Center website disclaimer on rotating fish back to ocean. Screenshot taken on Friday, Dec. 13, 2024.*

The Maui Ocean Center points out that it does return some species, saying [online](#) that some fish may not be on display “due to constant rotation of animals back to the ocean.”

Umberger and Gibson say that is misleading. For example, the species listed on the same page as the online disclaimer saw a combined mortality of 53% within a year of capture, with only two animals being returned to the ocean from 2022 to 2023. The prior permit year saw 14 individual fish returned to the ocean, while 548 died after collection.

Since it opened 26 years ago, the aquarium has never had to make collection data accessible to the general public. And in 2017, [Vuori told The Maui News](#) that the ocean center returned more than half of the fish it

collected, but declined to share raw numbers. Vuori said Thursday that he may have “misspoken” at the time.



*The Maui Ocean Center was opened on March 13, 1998. JD Pells/Hawai'i Journalism Initiative*

But Keller, in an email to the Hawai'i Journalism Initiative days earlier, said Vuori's 2017 statement was accurate at the time, and said that operational goals and collection strategies have since evolved in response to research, conservation priorities and resource management.

The recent small number of animals returned to the sea reflect the aquarium's current “conservation realities,” Keller said. He cited risks of releasing unhealthy fish into wild populations and strict regulations in how

frequently animals can be released.

Keller said the online disclaimer about the “constant rotation of animals back to the ocean” is intended to reflect the aquarium’s philosophy of managing its collection responsibly and sustainably, but “may require refinement to better align public perception with current practices.”



### **JD Pells**

JD is a news reporter for Maui Now. He has contributed stories to TCU 360, Fort Worth Report and the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. JD interned at Maui Now in 2021. He graduated from the Bob Schieffer College of Communication at Texas Christian University, with a bachelor's in journalism and business in 2022, before coming back home to Maui with the purpose of serving his community. He can be reached at [jdpells@pmghawaii.com](mailto:jdpells@pmghawaii.com).

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MOC Annual SAP Collection Report 2021-2022 – MORTALITIES

MOC collected 802 fishes. By the end of the permit year, 548 (68%) had died. Most of the collected fishes were among species that MOC could not keep alive for more than 1 month, yet MOC repeatedly captured them for their displays. Note: dead fish are those described by MOC as “MIA”, “DOA”, or “Removed to Waste”

Highlighted species were unauthorized as follows: quantities, species, life stages

SPECIES COLLECTED MULTIPLE TIMES AND WITH >50% MORTALITY RATE							
Common Name	Date: # Collected	Died w/in 1 week	Died w/in 1 month	Died w/in 3 months	Died w/in 6-9 mo.	Returned to Ocean Sick	Notes:
Blackfin Chromis  Qty. in excess: 71	11/11/21: 3 03/23/22: 51 03/30/22: 42 08/04/22: 3 08/05/22: 2 <b>TOTAL: 101</b>	4	3 51 38 3 2				<b>Total dead: 101</b>  <b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
Hawaiian Dascyllus (Damsel)  Qty. in excess: 42, incl. 3 for PACRC	10/30/21: 32 05/25/22: 2 06/10/22: 25 06/16/22: 1 07/13/22: 17 08/04/22: 1 08/05/22: 2 <b>TOTAL: 80</b>		1	18  1 2	14 2 6 6		<b>Total dead: 50</b> <b>Mortality rate: 72%</b> Total to PACRC/UH aquaculture research: 11 (8 were approved)
Manybar Goatfish  Qty. in excess: 52	10/28/21: 3 11/11/21: 9 11/11/21: 31 03/10/22: 2 03/30/22: 3 04/27/22: 1 06/17/22: 4 08/05/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 54</b>	1 1	3 8 2 2 2 1 4 1	28  1			<b>Total dead: 54</b>  <b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
Akule	11/21/21: 43 03/20/22: 1 03/27/22: 2 <b>TOTAL: 46</b>	15	1 2		28		<b>Total dead: 46</b>  <b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
Sharpnose Mullet/uouoa	11/21/21: 40 08/11/22: 6 <b>TOTAL: 46</b>	14 1	21 1		5		<b>Total dead: 42</b>  <b>Mortality rate: 91%</b>
Forcepsfish  Qty. in excess: 21	03/11/22: 8 03/23/22: 2 03/30/22: 1 04/15/22: 2 04/26/22: 2 04/27/22: 4 08/17/22: 6 <b>TOTAL: 25</b>		1 1	4  2 4	1	2 (8 days)	<b>Total dead: 14</b> <b>RTO: 2</b> <b>Mortality rate: 56%</b>

Common Name	Date: # Collected	Died w/in 1 week	Died w/in 1 month	Died w/in 3 months	Died w/in 6-9 mo.	Returned to Ocean Sick	Notes:
Bicolor Anthias  Qty. in excess: 5	03/23/22: 1 03/29/22: 7 03/30/22: 5 08/05/22: 12 <b>TOTAL: 25</b>		1 3 5	2 5	2		<b>Total dead: 18</b>  <b>Mortality rate: 72%</b>
Hawaiian Silverside	10/01/21: 7 03/29/22: 17 <b>TOTAL: 24</b>	16	1	2	5		<b>Total dead: 24</b>  <b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
Randall's Pufferfish	03/27/22: 14 04/27/22: 6 <b>TOTAL: 20</b>	2	2 3	7 2		3	<b>Total dead: 16</b> RTO/SICK: 3 Unknown: 1 <b>Mortality rate: 80%</b>
Lavender Tang  Qty. in excess: 10	11/11/21: 6 03/23/22: 1 06/10/22: 1 06/17/22: 4 08/11/22: 1 08/17/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 14</b>		6  1	1 1			<b>Confirmed dead: 9</b> <b>Likely dead: 13</b> <b>Mortality rate: 64 - 93%</b>
Agile Chromis Qty. in excess: 4	11/11/21: 1 03/29/22: 1 3/30/22: 1 04/15/22: 2 08/17/22: 9 <b>TOTAL: 14</b>		1 1 2 5	4	1		<b>Total dead: 14</b> <b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
Yellow Tang  Qty. in excess: 2 Unauth. lifestage: 7	03/23/22: 3 03/29/22: 1 03/30/22: 3 04/27/22: 3 06/10/22: 1 08/04/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 12</b>	1	1 3				<b>Total dead: 5</b> <b>Mortality rate: 42%</b>
Spotted Boxfish  Qty. in excess: 9	10/28/21: 1 11/11/21: 1 03/30/22: 1 04/26/22: 1 05/12/22: 1 05/25/22: 1 06/10/22: 1 06/17/22: 2 08/11/22: 2 <b>TOTAL: 11</b>		1 1  1 1 1	1  1		1 1	<b>Total dead: 7</b> RTO sick w/in 1 month: 2 Unknown: 1  <b>Mortality rate: 64%</b>
Flagtail: Kuhlia xenura  K.sandvicensis	03/11/22: 4 08/11/22: 2 08/23/22: 5 <b>TOTAL: 11</b>		4 1 4				<b>Total dead: 9</b>  <b>Mortality rate: 82%</b>

Common Name	Date: # Collected	Died w/in 1 week	Died w/in 1 month	Died w/in 3 months	Died w/in 6-9 mo.	Returned to Ocean Sick	Notes:
Hawaiian Whitespotted Toby  Qty. in excess: 6	03/11/22: 1 04/15/22: 1 04/26/22: 1 06/17/22: 2 08/05/22: 1 08/16/22: 3 <b>TOTAL: 9</b>	1	1	1 1  1			Total dead: 6  Mortality rate: 67%
Teardrop Butterflyfish	05/13/22: 3 08/17/22: 5 <b>TOTAL: 8</b>	2	3			1	Total dead: 5  Mortality rate: 63%
Bluespotted Cornetfish  Qty. in excess: 4	03/20/22: 2 03/27/22: 2 04/27/22: 2 07/29/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 7</b>	2	1	1  1	1	1 (injured)	Total dead: 6 RTO: 1 Mortality rate: 86%
Striped Mullet (‘ama‘ama)	03/11/22: 5 08/23/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 6</b>		5				Total dead: 5  Mortality rate: 83%
Saddle Wrasse Qty. in excess: 1	03/23/22: 2 03/30/22: 2 06/17/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 5</b>		1		2 1 1		Total dead: 5 Mortality rate: 100%
Orangespine Unicornfish Unauth. lifestage: 1	11/11/21: 4 03/11/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 5</b>		1 1	1			Dead: 3 Mortality rate: 60%
Pencil/Smallt ail Wrasse	11/11/21: 3 08/05/22: 2 <b>TOTAL: 5</b>		3 2				Dead: 5  Mortality rate: 100%
Hawaiian Garden eel	02/25/22: 3 08/25/22: 2 <b>TOTAL: 5</b>		1	1	1		Total dead: 3  Mortality rate: 60%
Yellowfin Goatfish	10/28/22: 1 04/07/11: 3 <b>TOTAL: 4</b>	2	1	1			Total dead: 4 Mortality rate: 100%
Multiband Butterflyfish	03/11/22: 1 03/30/22: 1 08/17/22: 2 <b>TOTAL: 4</b>		1 1	2			Total Dead: 4  Mortality rate: 100%
Crown Toby Qty. in excess: 2	06/16/22: 2 06/16/22: 1 07/07/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 4</b>	1	1 1 1				Total dead: 4  Mortality rate: 100%
Saddled Snake Eel	10/01/21: 2 10/28/21: 1 <b>TOTAL: 3</b>	2			1 (10 mo)		Total dead: 3  Mortality rate: 100%

Common Name	Date: # Collected	Died w/in 1 week	Died w/in 1 month	Died w/in 3 months	Died w/in 6-9 mo.	Returned to Ocean Sick	Notes:
Bluestripe Pipefish Qty. in excess: 1	11/04/21: 2 03/11/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 3</b>				1 1		<b>Total Dead: 2</b> <b>Mortality rate: 67%</b>
Belted Wrasse Qty. in excess: 2	11/11/21: 1 03/30/22: 1 06/10/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 3</b>	1	1				<b>Total Dead: 2</b> <b>Mortality rate: 67%</b>
kole	03/23/22: 1 04/27/22: 1 06/16/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 3</b>	1			1		<b>Total dead: 2</b> <b>Mortality rate: 67%</b>
Hawaiian Cleaner Wrasse	03/23/22: 1 04/26/22: 1 04/27/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 3</b>	1	1		1		<b>Total dead: 3</b> <b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
Arc-eye Hawkfish Qty. in excess: 1	04/15/22: 1 06/17/22: 2 <b>TOTAL: 3</b>			2		1 (1 week)	<b>Total dead: 2</b> RTO/SICK: 1 <b>Mortality rate: 67%</b>
Chocolate- dipped Chromis	08/04/22: 2 08/05/22: 1 <b>Total: 3</b>	1	1				<b>Total dead: 2</b> <b>Mortality rate: 67%</b>
Bluespine Unicornfish Unauth. lifestage: 1	03/11/22: 1 06/16/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 2</b>	1	1				<b>Total Dead: 2</b> <b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
Shy Filefish	03/23/22: 1 03/30/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 2</b>		1	1			<b>Total dead: 2</b> <b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
<b>SPECIES COLLECTED ON A SINGLE TRIP AND WITH &gt;50% MORTALITY RATE</b>							
Hawaiian Eye-bar Goby	08/16/22: 7		7				<b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
Paletail Unicornfish	11/11/21: 4		4				<b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
Ornate Butterflyfish	03/11/22: 4		1	3			<b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
Jobfish (deepwater)	07/29/22: 3		2				<b>Total dead: 2</b> <b>Mortality rate: 67%</b>
Convict Tang	08/23/22: 3		3				<b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
Hawaiian Spaghetti Eel	11/21/22: 2	2					<b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
Opelu	11/21/21: 2	2					<b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
Ornate Wrasse	05/25/22: 2	2					<b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>
Galactic Scorpionfish	08/05/22: 2		2				<b>Mortality rate: 100%</b>

Common Name	Date: # Collected	Died w/in 1 week	Died w/in 1 month	Died w/in 3 months	Died w/in 6-9 mo.	Returned to Ocean Sick	Notes:
Blackspot Sergeant	08/23/22: 2		1	1			Mortality rate: 100%
Hawaiian Bigeye	10/01/21: 1			1			Mortality rate: 100%
Decorated Dragonette	10/01/21: 1	1					Mortality rate: 100%
Yellowmargin Moray Eel	10/06/21: 1	1					Mortality rate: 100%
White Margin Unicornfish	10/30/22: 1				1		Mortality rate: 100%
Potter's Angelfish	11/11/21: 1		1				Mortality rate: 100%
Lei Triggerfish	11/11/21: 1				1		Mortality rate: 100%
Giant Trevally	01/27/22: 1		1				Mortality rate: 100%
Bandtail Goatfish	01/28/22: 1			1			Mortality rate: 100%
Kuda Seahorse	02/11/22: 1				1		Mortality rate: 100%
Hawaiian Orbicular Velvetfish	03/17/22: 1			1			Mortality rate: 100%
Fourline Wrasse	03/29/22: 1	1					Mortality rate: 100%
Pinktail Durgon	05/13/22: 1			1			Mortality rate: 100%
Fourspot Butterflyfish	05/25/22: 1				1		Mortality rate: 100%
Palenose Parrotfish	06/16/22: 1	1					Mortality rate: 100%
Squaretail Filefish	06/30/22: 1		1				Mortality rate: 100%
Ewa Fangblenny	08/04/22: 1			1			Mortality rate: 100%
Waikiki Cardinalfish	08/17/22: 1		1				Mortality rate: 100%
Yellow-spotted Snake Eel	08/25/22: 1	1					Mortality rate: 100%
Peacock Razorfish	08/25/22: 1	1					Mortality rate: 100%

SPECIES WITH MORTALITY RATES AT 50% OR BELOW							
Common Name	Date: # Collected	Died w/in 1 week	Died w/in 1 month	Died w/in 3 months	Died w/in 6-9 mo.	Returned to Ocean Sick	Notes:
Bluestripe Snapper Qty. in excess: 17	07/13/22: 15 08/04/22: 4 08/16/22: 18 <b>TOTAL: 37</b>			3			Total dead: 3  Mortality rate: 8%
Pennant Butterflyfish Qty. in excess: 3	07/13/22: 12 08/16/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 13</b>	1					Total dead: 1  Mortality rate: 8%
Iridescent Cardinalfish  Qty. in excess: 4	03/29/22: 4 03/30/22: 1 06/10/22: 1 08/04/22: 1 08/05/22: 4 08/16/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 12</b>		1		1		Total dead: 2  Mortality rate: 17%
Milletseed Butterflyfish	06/16/22: 1 07/13/22: 5 08/16/22: 3 <b>TOTAL: 9</b>	1 2		1			Total dead: 4  Mortality rate: 44%
Spotted Cardinalfish	07/13/22: 6			2			Total dead: 2  Mortality rate: 33%
Indigo Hover Goby/Blue Dartfish	03/23/22: 1 08/05/22: 4 <b>TOTAL: 5</b>	1	1				Total dead: 2  Mortality rate: 40%
Ringtail Wrasse	04/27/22: 2 08/17/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 3</b>			1			Total Dead: 1  Mortality rate: 33%
Oval Chromis	04/27/22: 1 07/13/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 2</b>				1		Total Dead: 1  Mortality rate: 50%
Bigeye Emperor/mu	04/27/22: 1 08/05/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 2</b>		1				Total Dead: 1  Mortality rate: 50%
Black Durgon	04/27/22: 2				1		Total Dead: 1 Mortality rate: 50%
Yellowtail Coris Unaut. Lifestage: 1	05/25/22: 1 06/16/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 2</b>		1			1	Total dead: 1  Mortality rate: 50%
Blacktail Snapper	06/04/22: 1 07/25/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 2</b>				1		Total dead: 1  Mortality rate: 50%

**27 SPECIES WITH NO MORTALITIES THROUGH 9/25/22**

Common Name	Date: # Collected	Common Name	Date: # Collected	Common Name	Date: # Collected
Zebra Eel Qty. in excess: 1	10/28/21: 1 01/27/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 2</b>	Panther Flounder Qty. in excess: 4	11/04/21: 1	Devil Scorpionfish Qty. in excess: 3	11/24/21: 1 01/27/22: 1 04/15/22: 1 06/16/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 4</b>
Scalloped Hammerhead Shark	01/28/22: 1 RTO: same day	Scrawled Filefish	03/11/22: 1	Broad Stingray	03/27/22: 1
Argus Grouper/Roi	03/30/23: 1 RTO: w/in 1 week	Tiger Shark	04/13/22: 1	Leatherback/lai	04/27/22: 1
Leaf Scorpionfish	04/28/22: 1	Cigar Wrasse	05/13/22: 1 RTO: w/in 1 mo.	Threadfin Butterflyfish	05/25/22: 1 06/17/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 2</b>
Great Barracuda	05/31/22: 1	Psychedelic Wrasse	06/10/22: 1	Painted Frogfish	06/10/22: 1
Orange shoulder surgeonfish	06/10/22: 1	Spotfin Porcupinefish	06/15/22: 1	Hawaiian Lionfish	06/16/22: 1 07/07/22: 1 <b>TOTAL: 2</b>
Blackside Hawkfish	06/17/22: 1	Picasso Triggerfish	07/28/22: 1	Raccoon Butterflyfish	08/04/22: 2
Fisher's Angelfish	08/04/22: 1	Hawaiian Squirrelfish	08/05/22: 1	Redspotted Sandperch	08/05/22: 2
Flame Wrasse	08/17/22: 1	Hawaiian Sergeant	08/17/22: 3	Thornback Cowfish	08/25/22: 1

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:43:10 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Maureen Garry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a longtime resident of Hawaii, I urge you to support SB2996 and pass it out of committee.

It is our kuleana to preserve the reef and the life found there. Allowing commercial exploitation of our natural resources is shortsighted.

Mahalo for your kokua,

Maureen Garry

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:43:42 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sherman Warner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2996

I am Sherman Warner, a resident of Waimea on Hawaii Island, and I strongly support SB2996.

For more than 20 years, I have been a shoreline fisher (catch and release) and a kayak and outrigger canoe paddler at Kawaihae, currently paddling six days a week. I fondly remember paddling over large schools of yellow tang, but that was many years ago. Today, I may see one or two yellow tang every six months. The tang have simply vanished. The health of our reef ecosystems is threatened by many factors, but predation by aquarium collectors is one of the few threats that we can eliminate quickly, easily and permanently.

I urge you to support the beauty and health of our reefs by passing SB2996 out of committee.

SUBJECT: Testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **SB2996 - Relating to Environmental Protection; Banning Commercial Aquarium Collection.**

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Kēhau Springer, and I am a kanaka ‘ōiwi practitioner and researcher residing in Kea‘au, Moku o Keawe. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **SB2996.**

SB2996 is timely, necessary and long overdue. It addresses a fundamental policy question that has been deferred for decades: whether Hawai‘i’s nearshore reef species should be treated as export commodities for private profit, or protected as public trust resources essential to ecological integrity, cultural practices, and intergenerational well-being.

#### **Protecting Public Trust Resources and Community Stewardship:**

Commercial aquarium collection is a for-profit, export-oriented industry that commodifies Hawai‘i’s nearshore reef ecosystems for ornamental markets abroad. It removes fish that serve critical ecological functions—particularly herbivorous species essential to reef resilience and that hold deep cultural significance for Kanaka ‘Ōiwi as food sources, indicators of ecosystem health, and participants in customary practices.

Peer-reviewed research has documented significant declines of targeted reef species at aquarium collection sites (Tissot & Hallacher, 2003), with later studies showing continued depletion in areas open to harvest despite management interventions (Williams et al., 2009; Stevenson et al., 2011). These findings confirm what lawai‘a have long observed. At a time when our reefs are already under severe stress from climate change, bleaching events, and land-based pollution, continued extraction for luxury markets is neither prudent nor pono.

#### **Upholding Constitutional and Cultural Responsibilities:**

SB2996 aligns with Hawai‘i’s constitutional obligations. Article XI, Section 1 of the Hawai‘i State Constitution, affirms that marine resources are held in trust for present and future generations. Article XII, Section 7 further mandates the protection of Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices. The Ka Pa‘akai o ka ‘Āina (2000) decision reaffirmed that state agencies must identify cultural practices, assess the impacts of proposed actions, and adopt protective measures.

Commercial aquarium collection fails these standards. It displaces traditional lawai‘a relationships, disrupts konohiki stewardship systems, and erodes the spiritual and ecological balance foundational to our identity as people of the sea. There is no cultural or ecological justification for continuing this extractive practice.

#### **Why Action Matters**

SB2996 preserves scientific research, education, aquaculture, and captive breeding activities, while removing the legal ambiguity that has allowed agencies to claim they are required to permit commercial aquarium collection. Agency rulemaking can regulate how an activity operates, but only the Legislature can determine whether the activity should be allowed at all. This bill provides that clarity and prevents further depletion of our reef fish on a costly and divisive permitting regime.

For nearly a decade, commercial aquarium collection has been effectively shut down due to litigation, while surveys consistently show strong public support for a ban. Meanwhile, Kanaka ‘Ōiwi communities across the pae ‘āina continue to seek state support for community-based stewardship and co-management of nearshore resources. SB2996 allows the State to refocus its limited capacity where it is most urgently needed, rather than propping up an industry with negligible public benefit.

**A Call for Pono Governance:**

Since the passage of Act 306 in 1998, which established the West Hawai‘i Regional Fishery Management Area and effectively institutionalized the commercial aquarium trade, Hawai‘i’s Legislature has introduced more than a dozen bills seeking to limit, regulate, or prohibit this practice. Despite widespread community concern and mounting ecological evidence, nearly every measure since has died in committee or been vetoed. This persistent pattern reflects a structural reluctance to prioritize reef protection over commercial extraction. SB2996 represents an opportunity to help break that cycle and align state policy with community values, constitutional obligations, and long-term reef protection.

Our reefs are more than commodities and ornaments, they are our ancestors, our teachers, and providers that sustain our identity and resilience as Kanaka ‘Ōiwi. Mahalo nui loa to this committee for advancing SB2996 and for standing in support of Hawai‘i’s people, moana, ‘āina, culture and lāhui. I respectfully urge your full support of this measure.

Mahalo nui for your consideration!

Na‘u

*Shauna Kēhaunani Springer*

na Shauna Kēhaunani Springer  
Kea‘au, Moku o Keawe, Hawai‘i  
Founder & Executive Director, Ka Pa‘akai Consulting  
Member of Nā Kai ‘Ewalu  
PhD Candidate, Te Whare Wānaga o Waikato (The University of Waikato)

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:53:16 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kamuela Akeo	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e,

I opposed this bill.

The bill says, “the cost of managing and enforcing the aquarium pet trade effectively exceeds the economic benefit of the industry to the state.” In this sentence we find this bill is sheer laziness; this bill does nothing to protect the marine ecosystem. It is neo-liberal capitalism posing as environmentalism. On page 2, lines 15 to 16 states the legal precedent regarding the taking of sand, wholly ironic when considering the artificial sand that is used across the tourist sector. It relates the harvesting of fish to an obscure NOAA study about the value of our reefs. Finally, the bill mentions the 80% decrease of marine species in areas. Aside for this sentence’s terseness, how can aquarium capture be the only reason for the decreasing in the population when considering the death of corals, pollution, and ocean warming?

This bill does nothing to bolster the DLNR and enforce and prosecute the constant theft and abuse of our natural resources. What it does is more malicious. I would like to ask the sponsors of this bill the following:

1. How will permits be issued pertinent to section 187A-6 Hawaii Revised Statutes?
2. How will permits be issued pertinent to non-commercial capture?
3. What are the current captive-breeding and aquaculture efforts, as regulated by section 187A-3.5?

How can this bill say ‘managing harvesting exceeds the economic benefit’ when the whole argument for this bill is the “\$33,570,000,000” [sic] value of the reefs? I suppose perhaps it is not economic benefit but in fact, the benefit of the special interest, non-commercial capture, and captive breeding programs. Who are such groups?

The logic of this bill is because people steal from the ocean we should issue permits. This bill bans nothings. Instead, I implore the Senate to fund DLNR enforcement.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:53:35 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lei K Ayat-Verdadero	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly **support** SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai'i's people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. As a decendent of kanaka ʻōiwi I say a'ole.

Hawai'i's Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai'i's marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption and food insecurity.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Lei Ayat-Verdadero, Papakōlea/O'ahu

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:02:57 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Toni Gregg	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill will resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996. And support the protection of Hawai‘i, Native Hawaiians, and all its natural and cultural resources in perpetuity.

Mahalo nui.

Makani Gregg

13-470 Pohoiki Road, Pahoa, HI, 96778

09 February 2026

Re: SB2996 Relating to Environmental Protection

Aloha e Senate Committee Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and Members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts, and Hawaiian Affairs.

I am U'ilani Naipo of Moku O Keawe, and I am writing in **strong support** of this measure to prohibit the commercial collection of aquatic life for aquarium purposes. I also recommend an amendment to repeal HRS §188-31 in its entirety. Repealing HRS §188-31.5 alone may unintentionally create a loophole allowing other aquatic species to be collected and exported under different classifications, as in a recent prosecution. This concern is heightened by existing enforcement limitations, as DOCARE already faces significant challenges in detecting, investigating, and prosecuting the unlawful take and export of live reef fish.

Hawai'i's reef fish are among the most unique and fragile in the world. Many species exist nowhere else on Earth and play essential ecological roles that maintain reef health, biodiversity, and resilience. For decades, millions of fish have been removed from Hawai'i's reefs, disrupting the balance of already vulnerable marine ecosystems. The commercial aquarium trade further undermines these ecosystems at a time when reefs are under increasing stress from climate change, warming oceans, coral bleaching, invasive species, and land-based pollution.

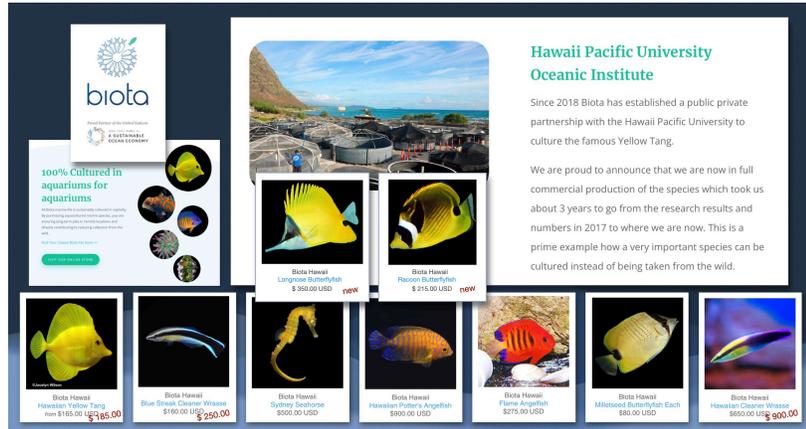
**Hawai'i's Constitution Public Trust Doctrine** Under Article XI, Section 1 of the Hawai'i State Constitution, the State has a constitutional obligation to manage natural resources pursuant to Hawai'i's Public Trust Doctrine. These resources are held in trust for the benefit of present and future generations and require the highest level of scrutiny when proposed for private commercial use.

- **Hierarchy of Use**

Under a reasonable hierarchy of use, the health and long-term sustainability of public trust resources must remain the foremost consideration. Subsistence use and fishing for the local food market appropriately follow in priority, consistent with sustainable management. All other uses must be evaluated to ensure they do not impair the resource or diminish its availability to the public. Commercial aquarium fishing is an extractive activity that serves external commercial markets rather than the people of Hawai'i. It is inconsistent with the principles of mālama 'āina and mālama kai and with the State's public trust responsibilities, as it

provides no meaningful public benefit while placing additional pressure on shared natural resources.

- **Proven Alternative Solution**



A viable alternative to aquarium fishing already exists through aquaculture. The lau'ipala (yellow tang) and Potter's angelfish, two of the most sought-after species in the aquarium trade, have both been successfully cultured in captivity, with yellow tang aquaculture established since 2017. Rather than removing 100,000 lau'ipala from our reefs, and more than a thousand of the **endemic species Potter's Angelfish** from Hawai'i's reefs, aquaculture provides a sustainable alternative that avoids further depletion of public trust resources. In pursuing any for-profit activity, the State must prioritize its fiduciary and cultural responsibility to Hawai'i's 'āina and shared natural resources over privatized economic benefit.

**Cost of Fishery** – The full public cost of managing this fishery has not been disclosed by the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) or DOCARE. A 2021 study estimated annual administrative, operational, compliance, and enforcement costs between \$300,000 and \$500,000 when the fishery was last active in 2017. Adjusted for current conditions, a realistic estimate today would likely exceed \$500,000 annually. This public expense would occur while collecting only approximately \$100 per permit, limited to seven permittees and a small number of safety divers, while commercial collectors and associated businesses may generate millions of dollars in gross revenue.

**Opposition & Decision Making** – Public opposition to commercial aquarium collection has been clear and consistent.

In October 2025, over 1,400 written testimonies were submitted opposing the reopening of commercial aquarium fishing in a BLNR meeting.

In November 2025, the Hawaiian Civic Club of Hilo introduced a resolution calling for a ban on commercial aquarium collection in Hawai'i's waters, which was unanimously adopted by delegates at the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs Convention, representing more than 4,000 members.

Following this unified position, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs drafted similar legislation, and its Board of Trustees unanimously voted to include the measure in its 2026 Legislative Package.

In January 2026, the Hawai'i County Council unanimously voted to adopt Resolution 422-25, Urging the legislature to prohibit the take of aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes.

Aha Moku has also consistently testified in support of a ban at Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) hearings, representing 147 moku throughout the pae'āina.

**Decision Making.** In December 2023, the Board of Land and Natural Resources was petitioned by marine advocates to direct the DAR to initiate rulemaking to prohibit commercial aquarium fishing. The Board unanimously voted in support of the petitioners' request for a ban, contrary to DAR's recommendation. However, the Office of the Attorney General advised that a ban could not be implemented through administrative rulemaking alone. In December 2025, the Division of Aquatic Resources was permitted to proceed with rulemaking related to commercial aquarium fishing, while the Chair of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) encouraged petitioners to pursue legislative action to enact a prohibition on commercial aquarium collection. A similar measure to this one now comes before the Legislature to fulfill that course of action.

Since 1976, more than 8.6 million fish have been removed from Hawai'i's reefs for the commercial aquarium trade. Permitting the continued take of aquatic life effectively legalizes the privatization and exploitation of public trust reef fish resources for the benefit of a small number of operators, placing short-term commercial interests above the long-term sustainability of shared natural resources.

Beyond ecological concerns, this issue carries deep cultural significance. Native Hawaiian traditions recognize the reciprocal relationship between people and the ocean, and the principles of mālama 'āina, aloha 'āina calls for stewardship, restraint, and responsibility to future generations. Hawai'i's reefs, are not commodities; they are

living systems that support subsistence practices, cultural continuity, recreation, education, and a sustainable visitor economy. Protecting reef life in its natural habitat ensures these benefits remain available to local communities rather than being depleted for markets elsewhere.

This measure represents an important and necessary step toward precautionary, ecosystem-based management. In light of ongoing environmental pressures and scientific uncertainty, the responsible course of action is to prohibit commercial aquarium collection and allow reef ecosystems the opportunity to recover and thrive.

I respectfully urge the Committees to pass this bill and demonstrate Hawai'i's commitment to mālama 'āina and aloha 'āina.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support.

Sincerely,



U'ilani Naipo

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:09:37 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Janet Brinkman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Janet Brinkman support SB2996. Kailua-Kona resident since the 70's have witnessed our ocean for 50 years of being heavily immersed in the ocean charter community. The Math is not Mathing. We are in new times with having so little left to replenish. Due to the loss of coral, you can not take any fish count to justify the aquarium trade. This whole cycle of life has been extremely damaged. Ecological disruption: Removal of fish causes Algae to grow unchecked and will continue to kill coral. Species Decline: Kona Hawaii top aquarium species were found 45-63% less abundant in collection waters, in some cases populations never recovered even after collection stopped. Destructive Capture Techniques: Collection practices are very damaging to coral with netting fish causing more devastation to the whole infrastructure that our fish need for survival. We all have an obligation to leave our future generations the same resources we have for sustainability. Aloha Jan Brinkman

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:09:47 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Susan Bambara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB 2996 - We were promised that our exotic fish population would bounce back and it has not! It's time to do the right thing and BAN Aquarium Fishing before there's nothing left. If people want to see our beautiful fish then they can come here and support our local economy by snorkling to see them in ther home.

February 9, 2026

Committee on Hawaiian Affairs & Committee on Water, Land, Culture, and the Arts  
Conference Room 224  
State Capitol  
415 South Beratania Street

Re: Testimony in support of SB2996

My name is Kaikea Nakachi and I **strongly support SB2996**.

Being born and raised on Hawai'i Island, I have personally witnessed the damage of the entitled, unnecessary, insensitive, and inappropriate aquarium trade. I watched the droves of Maui aquarium fishers move to Hawai'i Island after they were banned on Maui. I watched them illegally continue after the supreme court mandated them to stop when it was determined the state violated HEPA by issuing permits without cultural or environmental review.

As a kanaka maoli who holds a master's degree in tropical conservation biology and environmental science, I have both the mo'okū'auhau containing generational knowledge of pono and sustainable practices in Hawai'i, as well as the academic background of western research and management. It allows me clarity in seeing how wrong this industry is, and that it should never have been allowed to begin with. Now, as we face unprecedented global threats of climate change, coral bleaching, and ocean acidification, we cannot afford to overfish our local ocean. I will always support what our kūpuna taught us: reciprocal practices to steward healthy marine resources that allow sustainable subsistence fishing.

Unfortunately, we have lost our way. Most of the fishing done today is no longer reciprocal. There is so much take and take and so little given back. The aquarium industry is the absolute worst in this regard. Taking millions of fish over the years, majority being keiki, who will never contribute to Hawai'i. They will not get a chance to provide the ecosystem service as herbivores to help coral recover from bleaching. They will not be available as prey for other fish or animals to eat and become momona. They will not get the chance to grow up and contribute to the next generation of their own species.

In the face of food insecurity, it is in the best interest of the people of Hawai'i to limit these inappropriate types of commercial fishing and focus on promoting abundance to support subsistence fishing and allow fish populations to be healthy and resilient enough to weather climate change and the myriads of other threats.

I am proud to be one of many voices that have shown up year after year to defend Hawaiian reef fish in legislative committee hearings, BLNR meetings, county council meetings, and even supreme court hearings. Last year I joined dozens of communities and over 1300 individuals from across the pae'āina to urge the BLNR to not move forward with a permit process for commercial aquarium collection. In 2024 I supported the resolution sent to BLNR for administrative rules to ban commercial aquarium collection. I was incredibly disheartened to hear the opinion of the BLNR feeling that HRS § 188-31 prevented them from banning commercial aquarium collection outright. I tried to urge them that the statute states that the board **may** issue an aquarium fish permit, not **shall**. The word **may** would give the board the decision-

making power issue or not issue permits. I also attempted to argue that the statute would still be satisfied with a permit process that is limited to non-commercial applicants.

This bill, along with the similar SB2535 would not allow such a damaging industry to continue. I urge both committees to please pass SB2996, and to even consider amending to add language like SB2535 that repeals all of HRS § 188-31 to more completely ban commercial aquarium collection in addition to the export and sale.

Mahalo nui,  
Kaikea Nakachi

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:21:43 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rene Umberger	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committees:

I submit this testimony in **strong support** of SB2996 to permanently prohibit the commercial collection and export of Hawai‘i’s coral reef wildlife for the aquarium pet trade.

Scientific research, agency records, court findings, and decades of public input all point to the same conclusion: the aquarium trade causes ecological harm, conflicts with Native Hawaiian cultural values, inflicts predictable animal suffering, enables illegal activity, and imposes significant public costs for private gain. These harms persist despite years of attempted regulation and even after court-ordered prohibitions began in late 2017.

**Ecosystem and science concerns.**

Reef species targeted by the aquarium trade—primarily herbivores—perform essential ecological functions such as algal grazing, nutrient cycling, and maintaining reef resilience. Selective removal reduces abundance and biomass and weakens reefs at a time when climate-driven coral bleaching and disease are intensifying.

Importantly, **recent analyses of DAR and NOAA data show that the most heavily collected species, lau‘i‘pala (yellow tang), have failed to recover as biologically and historically expected following the cessation of collection pressure beginning in 2017–2018.** This undermines long-standing assumptions that populations reliably rebound once extraction stops. At the same time, DAR has sharply reduced reef fish monitoring effort, limiting the State’s ability to detect trends or responsibly manage renewed extraction.

**Cultural and ethical conflict.**

Hawai‘i’s reefs are not commodities. They are integral to Native Hawaiian subsistence, cultural practice, and intergenerational stewardship. Commercial capture and export of reef wildlife for pets conflicts with mālama ‘āina, pono fishing practices, and the State’s constitutional public-trust obligation to protect natural resources for present and future generations.

**Animal welfare impacts.**

Reef fish are wild animals adapted to complex reef environments, not domesticated pets. Capture, handling, confinement, starvation, and long-distance transport cause barotrauma, extreme physiological stress, immune suppression, and elevated mortality, resulting in drastically

shortened lifespans. Inflicting predictable and unnecessary suffering for non-essential purposes is indefensible.

**Regulatory failure and illegal activity.**

Decades of regulation have failed to prevent harm. Enforcement capacity remains limited, and since 2018 multiple aquarium-trade poaching operations went undetected for years until community tips led to convictions. Reopening legal collection would provide cover for increased illegal take and wildlife laundering.

**Public cost, private benefit.**

The aquarium trade benefits a small number of collectors and exporters while taxpayers bear the costs of monitoring, enforcement, administration, and ecosystem degradation. This privatization of profit and socialization of harm is unjust.

**Lack of necessity and viable alternatives.**

The aquarium trade is not essential for food security, medicine, or cultural survival. Non-extractive alternatives—including reef tourism, education, research, and aquaculture—allow people to appreciate reef wildlife without removing it from the ocean. Notably, the most popular species, lau‘i‘pala (yellow tang), is now widely available from Hawai‘i-based aquaculture.

**Why legislative action is required.**

In 2023, the Board of Land and Natural Resources unanimously supported a community-led request to permanently end commercial aquarium collection but claimed it lacked clear statutory authority to do so, directing the issue to the Legislature. When the agency charged with protecting public-trust resources acknowledges that an activity is unwanted, unnecessary, and harmful—yet asserts it lacks authority to stop it—the responsibility properly shifts to this body.

**Conclusion.**

The commercial aquarium trade in Hawai‘i’s coral reef wildlife is unnecessary, harmful, and culturally and ethically indefensible. I respectfully urge you to **pass this measure** to permanently prohibit the commercial collection and export of Hawai‘i’s reef wildlife for the pet trade.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:27:18 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randy Fernley	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloh Committee Members,

As a commercial fisherman, **I urge all members to vote NO on SB 2996.**

The aquarium fishery has been proven to be sustainable thru over the past two decades of research from the State of Hawaii.

Due to a temporary halt until an EIS is fully completed, the small fishery has currently been shut down on both the Big Island and Oahu. Please allow this sustainable to exist by voting NO on SB 2996

My company, Coral Fish Hawaii, which I operated for over 40 years was shut down due to this temporary halt and it would be devastating to see, if this bill was passed, that our local residents could no longer enjoy and benefit from the pleasures of maintaining a marine aquarium.

**Again, please vote NO on SB2996**

Aloha,

Randy Fernley

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:29:30 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisette Akamine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

**I strongly support SB 2996**, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection consistent with the public trust and the needs of Hawai‘i’s residents, including Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners and the public at large.

Commercial aquarium fishing flies in the face of Hawai‘i’s constitutional public trust doctrine, which requires that our natural and cultural resources be used and conserved for the public good rather than private gain.

Over the years, the aquarium pet industry has extracted and exported millions of specimens of public trust marine life — 50% of which die in the process of collection and transport, with about 80% of the surviving fish dying within a year after collection. This outrageous, vanity extraction is for the pleasure of out-of-state / international collectors - where most of the profit from this industry is gleaned. By comparison, in the wild, reef fish like the collector-favored Yellow Tang live for 30-40 years.

Before the 2017 ban on aquarium pet industry activities in Hawai‘i, an estimated 8.6 million reef fish were extracted from Hawaiian waters, meaning approximately 4.3 million fish died before making it to pet stores and another 3.4 million died within a year of being sold. That is an egregious waste of our critical marine resources and cruel as well.

In purely economic terms, while some local residents do profit from the aquarium pet industry, the profit earned by this extractive industry (it has the potential to contribute about \$3 million annually to Hawai‘is economy) is miniscule compared to the profit earned by snorkeling and marine tours (almost **\$7 billion** annually) - industries which depend on vibrant coral reefs and healthy fish populations.

The commercial extraction of fish for the aquarium pet trade has diminished the ecological and cultural integrity of our reef systems, undermined the state’s food security and climate resilience, and degraded a cornerstone of our tourism economy. That is why an overwhelming majority of Hawai‘i residents, and Native Hawaiian subsistence communities in particular, support a permanent ban on commercial aquarium collection.

While commercial aquarium collection has not been allowed for the better part of a decade, the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) has recently proposed rules that would reopen West Hawai‘i waters to commercial aquarium collection, claiming that they are mandated to do so under state law.

Yet as DAR has recognized, agency rulemaking regulates *how* an activity operates, not *whether* the activity should be allowed. Accordingly, the Legislature has the authority—and kuleana—to decide whether this activity should be permitted at all.

Healthy coral reefs and ecosystems support food security, cultural and subsistence practices, provide shoreline protection and ensure profitable marine tourism revenues.

Therefore, a statutory ban is critical to protect what is not only a major economic engine for the state, but a cornerstone of resilience and self-sufficiency for our present and future generations from ever-increasing extractive stressors placed on our marine environment.

For these reasons, I **respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.**

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify,

Lisette Puanani Akamine

Kāne‘ohe, O‘ahu

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:31:32 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ute Bouchez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support for SB 2996

I am voicing my strong support for SB 2996.

My reasons are manifold and have been raised by others.

We do not need to further weaken the ecosystem of our ocean by taking from it. Taking what does not belong to us, potentially destroying a population for personal enjoyment.

There is something fundamentally wrong with this picture.

What gives us the right to disrespect that on which the Hawaiian Nation has built itself and identifies with, such as pono fishing, malama'aina including the protection of the environment?

When are we going to stop the destruction and start to continue to protect?  
SB 2996 is a great way to continue on the path of protection.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:32:59 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sonja Kanani Enos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye and Chair Richard, Vice Chair Lamosao and members of the respective committees,

As a native Hawaiian and lineal descendant to the South Kona areas, spanning from Miloli'i to Kealakekua, I am writing in **STRONG SUPPORT** for SB2996, which prohibits the harvesting of aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes, regardless of the method of collection.

Our reefs are not commodities. They are living ecosystems, cultural resources, sources of life and abundance for our future generations, and in our cultural view, the foundation for all of life, deserving protection.

Prohibiting commercial aquarium fishing will provide the highest form of protection to our reef biodiversity and health, promote long-term sustainability, and align with responsible stewardship of our ocean and marine environment.

Mahalo for your consideration and for your continued efforts to protect Hawai'i's marine environment for the generations to come.

Me ke aloha nui,

Sonja Kanani Enos

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:47:12 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Randy Cates	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Committee Members,

I appose this bill as it is very unfair and not needed, the Aquarium fishery has proven to be sustainable and this mearsure has and will affect all other fisheries in Hawaii very negativly. It has already had a negative affect on Aquaculture and Research as well as Public Aquariums. Please consider the long term negative effects on all other fisheries as well.

Sincerely

Randy Cates

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:47:47 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kapulei Flores	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in SUPPORT of SB2996, which prohibits the harvesting of aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes, regardless of collection method. This would establish a statewide statutory prohibition on the commercial collection of marine for sale and export as aquarium pets. No more than ever the state and health of our reefs and their ecosystem is of utmost importance. We are already seeing the effects of climate change throughout our reefs throughout the islands and the collection of reef fish for commercial use is severely impacting the health of our reefs. These fish are needed to help the ecosystem thrive and grow properly. Herbivorous and grazing fish control algae, support coral recovery, and strengthen reef resilience. Removing them for commercial trade weakens the entire living system that protects our shorelines, food webs, and communities. Please help us protect our reefs, oceans, fish, and a vital part of our ecosystem and resources here as a community.

Mahalo, Kapulei

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:51:27 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mary Metcalf	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Hawaii State Legislators,

My name is Mary Metcalf and I have lived in Kailua Kona, Hawaii for over twenty years now. Thirty eight years ago I began vacationing here, drawn by the beautiful coral reefs and fish in West Hawaii. The reef fish were so plentiful back then, it was truly miraculous to snorkel in this unique and inspirational ecosystem. Since then I have sadly witnessed first hand the bleaching and die off of these coral reefs and the steep decline in reef fish, which are both under enormous and numerous threats from human made causes.

Please support SB2996 to help Hawaii save this natural state treasure by eliminating the harmful practice of reef fish extraction for the commercial aquarium trade. Would you allow the capture and export of our threatened forest birds for the pet industry? How are our reef fish allowed this horrible demise to their lives?

Mahalo for your pono support of SB2996,

Mary Metcalf, Kailua Kona, Hawaii

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 11:58:50 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Thalia Fajans	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I am grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB2996 to establish a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection consistent with the public trust and the needs of Hawai'i's residents, including Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners and the public at large.

Healthy coral reefs and ecosystems support food security, cultural and subsistence practices, and provide shoreline protection. A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection.

For these reasons and others, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Thalia Fajans

Honalo, Hawai'i Island

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 12:03:42 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kim Coke	Individual	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Please oppose this bill.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 12:09:56 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ikaika Kincaid	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 12:22:47 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ashley Taylor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ashley Taylor. I lived in Lahaina for 12 years before the fire and now reside in Napili. I strongly support **SB2996** and urge you to pass this bill out of committee to permanently ban commercial aquarium collecting.

Coral reefs are already under extreme stress from climate change, warming oceans, acidification, and stronger storms. On top of these natural pressures, are the unnatural stressors such as cesspools, agricultural runoff, sedimentation, pollution, poaching, and coastal development. The commercial aquarium trade adds yet another unnecessary burden removing key species, disrupting reef balance, and weakening ecosystem resilience.

This trade benefits a small few while further exploiting an ocean and communities that are already stretched thin. What is taken from the reef cannot simply be replaced. Damage done today may take decades to heal, if it heals at all.

The ocean is not merely a resource to extract from, it is a living system that we must learn to live in balance with. Protecting our reefs now is essential for Hawai'i's future.

Please pass SB2996 out of committee.

Mahalo for your consideration.

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT TO SB 2996**  
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES.

SENATE COMMITTEES on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts, and Hawaiian Affairs  
Hawai'i State Capitol

February 10, 2026

1:00PM

CR 224

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Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the committees,

My name is Keanu Binney-Medeiros. I am a lineal descendant of Kealakekua Bay and a Hoa'āina of Ho'āla Kealakekua Nui. I work as a research diver and digital media specialist, documenting reef health, species presence, and human-use impacts through underwater monitoring and community-based storytelling. My work is grounded in mālama 'āina and a kuleana to this wahi pana, with the goal of supporting informed decision-making and long-term stewardship of Hawai'i's marine resources.

I submit this testimony in **support of SB 2996**, which would establish a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection in alignment with Hawai'i's public trust doctrine and the 'ike, values, and lived practices of our people.

Hawai'i's coral reefs are not commodities to be exploited; they are living systems that sustain food security, cultural and subsistence practices, shoreline protection, and climate resilience. For generations, our kūpuna managed these ecosystems through kilo, restraint, and reciprocity, not to maximize profit, but to ensure abundance for future generations. SB 2996 reflects these same principles by prioritizing long-term resilience over short-term extraction.

The commercial aquarium trade has removed millions of marine organisms—public trust resources—from Hawai'i's reefs, for export in the aquarium pet trade. Many of these animals do not survive beyond a year after collection. These outcomes raise serious concerns about whether this activity can reasonably be considered a sustainable or appropriate commercial use, particularly given the State's constitutional obligation to protect natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

The impacts of aquarium collection extends beyond individual species. Reef ecosystems weakened by extraction are less able to support food systems, cultural and subsistence practices, tourism, and climate adaptation. Although commercial aquarium fishing has been absent for nearly a decade, reef recovery remains ongoing and fragile. From my experience working in the field, meaningful restoration requires consistency, patience, and protection.

I recognize that the State has a responsibility to support economic activity, and I appreciate the difficult balance that agencies such as the Division of Aquatic Resources

are tasked with navigating. However, under Hawai'i's public trust doctrine, the protection of natural resources must remain the State's highest obligation. Economic activity should follow from healthy ecosystems—not come at their expense.

This raises a fundamental question the Legislature must answer: how can an extractive trade, built on private profit and documented ecological harm, be considered more important than preserving the very resources the State is constitutionally bound to protect?

If we fail to act now, we are choosing profit over kuleana, and telling our keiki that the loss of our reefs was an acceptable cost of doing business.

I respectfully encourage the committees to pass SB 2996 with the intention to continue leading with the values that have long guided Hawai'i: mālama 'āina, kuleana, and care for those who will inherit these islands after us.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Keanu Binney-Medeiros". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Keanu Binney-Medeiros



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**Testimony of Support  
SB2996  
February 9th, 2026**

Aloha Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Taha'a H. Kahele, I am a lineal descendant of Miloli'i, one of the last fishing villages on the island of Hawai'i (Moku O Keawe). **I come before you all today in the form of this testimony of support for SB2996. To demonstrate in this letter my strong and unwavering support of this senate bill.** For many years Aquarium Fishing has been contributing to the decline in health of our marine ecosystems. With science constantly showing fish populations decreasing in large numbers and coral reefs on the decline. This should already have been a sign of the aquarium fisheries unsustainable practices.

With Hawaii's reefs already incapacitated and the thought of allowing aquarium trade back into our waters will only cause further damage to our already ailing ecosystem. With a recent article providing substantial evidence on how AQ fisheries and its claims to it being a sustainable practice is a contradiction. Furthermore with the Ocean Institute of the Hawai'i Pacific University and their cultivation efforts of several species targeted by AQ. I see no reason to result in the wild harvest of these species.

The Aquarium Fisheries Trade does not understand how important these marine ecosystems are to the Hawaiian people (*Kanaka Oiwi*) and instead insist on contributing to the decline of a major lifeline that plays a crucial role in the sustainability of the native Hawaiian way of life. For many years our *kupuna* (ancestors) have seen the change in our waters from less fish to dying reefs to sea level rising. This isn't just a problem that didn't happen overnight; it's a result of years of harmful unsustainable fisheries practices like the aquarium trade.

With many of our reefs already surpassing the "point of no return" , what logic permits a highly unsustainable trade such as the aquarium fisheries back to our state waters, even inviting them to the table is unorthodox. The irony to disregard the AQ trade as not being a big contributor to the decline of reefs and fish is utter insanity and goes against one's conscience. Knowing the full ramifications of allowing the trade to continue.

When will we realize that what we are as humans in whatever we do, whether it be good or bad, leaves an imprint on the ecosystem that surrounds us. We as humans have the ability to be more cautious of our environment. We just tend to pick and choose when we want to be cautious. We pick what bill benefits us the most rather than seeing what benefits our communities as a whole. We as humans have a predescended nature to be selfish and greedy. Leading the collapse of a resource that is meant to be stewarded not commercialized.



KAHAHELE

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Growing up I was fortunate to be raised in Hawai'i and its environment. Listening to the stories of my grandparents telling me of how our seas were abundant with life, picturesque with the vibrancy of coral. Sustaining our people with an ever-abundated food resource. Gifting our people a way of life that was meant to last generations of *Kanaka*. Sadly the ocean our *kupuna* grew up in and saw in those days are very different to the oceans we see today. The difference from living in the change in our environment to trying to tell people about it is more complex than experiencing it first hand.

So I urge the committee today to consider passing this bill to allow our reefs and our *wahipana* to recover from this, with our conservation efforts steadily improving the conditions of these marine ecosystems. We realize that they will never be the same as how my grandparents described it. We can only hope to preserve what's left for the next generation. Help us to contribute to preserving a pristine resource for generations to come.

I would like to leave you all with this '*Olelo No'eau* that I constantly reminisce on. "***He Ali'i Ka 'Aina He Kauwa Ke Kanaka.***" (The land is a chief and man is its servant).

Let this testimony be a voice for the fishes, a mouthpiece for the seas. A proclamation for the *Moananuiakea*.

Mahalo for allowing me to present this testimony,

Me ka pomaikai a me ke aloha,  
Taha'a H. Kahele

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Taha'a H. Kahele', is positioned below the typed name.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 12:39:06 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Aspen Russell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the full ban of aquatic life collection for the aquarium industry.

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 12:42:54 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marie Iding	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Legislators,

I am a retired Educational Psychology professor taking Marine Biology and Coral Reef Biology courses. This is my second semester doing so.

I have learned that all elements of a coral reef or marine ecosystem all live in conjunction with each other and are crucial to the health and continued existence of the ecosystem. For the health and continued existence of our coral reefs we should NOT put the financial interests of a few before the preservation of our marine environment which is already under threat and fragile.

I am therefore **OPPOSED** and will appreciate your opposing this bill.

Thank you,

Marie Iding

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 12:43:01 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Conall K. Ravenscraft	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Ano ai ke aloha Chair and Senate Committee members,

Please let the following serve as testimony for myself, **Conall Kahaka'ioikamalie Ravenscraft**, resident and generational lineal descendant of Kealakekua, Hawaii.

I am speaking in **STRONG SUPPORT for SB2996**, which prohibits the harvesting of aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes, regardless of the method of collection.

I would like to thank this committee for hearing this measure and further urge its passage and recommendation.

Me ke aloha haahaa,

Conall Kahaka'ioikamalie Ravenscraft

Napoopoo, Kealakekua, Hawaii

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 12:44:59 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
M. Coe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Need to put a stop to exploitation of our marine resources via commercial aquarium take.



Testimony Before The  
Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts  
Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs

**IN SUPPORT OF SB2996**

February 10, 2026, 1:00 p.m., Room 224 & via Videoconference

We are Olan Leimomi Fisher and Kevin Chang, Kua'āina Advocate and Executive Director, respectively, testifying on behalf of [Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo \(or KUA\)](#). "Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo" stands for "grassroots growing through shared responsibility," and our acronym "KUA" means "backbone." **Our mission is to connect and empower communities to improve their quality of life through the collective care for their biocultural (natural and cultural) heritage, serving as a "backbone organization" that supports creative and community-driven solutions to problems stemming from environmental degradation.** Hawai'i's biocultural resources continue to be negatively impacted by political, economic, and social changes, and the increasing dangers of climate change make fostering and empowering resilient communities acutely critical.

Currently KUA supports three major networks of: (1) over 40 mālama 'āina (caring for our 'āina or "that which feeds") community groups collectively referred to as E Alu Pū (moving forward together); (2) over 60 loko i'a (fishpond aquaculture systems unique to Hawai'i) and wai 'ōpae (anchialine pool systems) sites in varying stages of restoration and development, with numerous caretakers, stakeholders, and volunteers known as the Hui Mālama Loko I'a ("caretakers of fishponds"); and (3) the Limu Hui made up of over 50 loea (traditional experts) and practitioners in all things "limu" or locally-grown "seaweed." **Our shared vision is to once again experience what our kūpuna (ancestors) referred to as 'ĀINA MOMONA – abundant and healthy ecological systems that sustain our community resilience and well-being.**

**KUA supports SB2996 as an incremental step toward 'āina momona.**

A popular quote of community elder and leader Mac Poepoe is "we do not play with our food."

KUA supports this bill based on the long term place-based opposition by traditional fishing communities in West Hawai'i and the growing sentiment of support for a statewide approach to addressing this matter within our networks. E Alu Pū members in West Hawai'i have long opposed commercial aquarium (AQ) collection in their region. Their opposition to AQ collection is based on their Native Hawaiian cultural philosophies, values, and traditions of lawai'a pono and place-based fishery management. In 1998, the West Hawai'i Regional Fishery Management Area (WHRFMA) was created along with the West Hawai'i Fishery Council (WHFC), largely in response to the AQ trades' decimation of their fishery. WHRFMA and WHFC were built upon the strong community efforts to make fishery governance more local and pertinent to the communities most dependent on the fishery. Further, the litigious history of the AQ trade shows the strong West Hawai'i pushback to this commercial industry that nearly eradicated entire fish species before the communities started taking formal action.

Some of these species are traditional food species and are necessary for upholding our unique and important reef ecosystems which should be a priority of our state. The highly lucrative aquarium trade primarily serves extractive interests for sales to an industry outside of our state for a non-essential, non-food use . Further, it is becoming feasible to grow the very species that go for the highest dollars in the aquaculture trade.

How does allowing for statewide AQ fishing, at the very least before completing the Holomua process for all islands, align with our Hawai'i State Constitution Article XII, Section 7 to protect all rights, customarily and traditionally, for Native Hawaiian ahupua'a tenants, as well as the public trust doctrine in Article XI, Section 1? We cannot see how it does. We question further why the push for AQ collection rules is being prioritized over other longstanding community efforts and management needs, especially those in West Hawai'i by Native Hawaiian and local communities in Ho'okena and Ka'ūpūlehu.

Although our focus at KUA has never been the economic value of our i'a, it is hard to ignore the flagrant economic imbalance at play between what little money would come back to DLNR through just \$100 per AQ permit, versus and the retail price \$100+ per AQ fish sold. It also seems imprudent and irresponsible as a management decision. With the only seven known potential AQ permittees, that would mean a mere \$700 annually going back to the state – for the care of 'āina and kai on behalf of Native Hawaiian and local people. Meanwhile, it is our understanding that the state management costs (excluding enforcement of the rules) is estimated at \$300,000 - \$500,000 annually.

The communities we work with are committed to ensuring the long-term health of our biocultural resources that they have cared for and depended on for generations since time immemorial. **We believe protecting our environment, the foundation of our very existence, is about sustained and long-term commitments toward achieving 'āina momona abundance once again.** To get there requires maintaining protections for mālama 'āina, including through this bill to prohibit an extractive, non-essential practice not rooted in Native Hawaiian culture or practices. Our decisions today will continue to shape the future that our keiki's keiki's keiki will one day inherit – we hope for a future of shared and harmonious abundance, and hope you do, too.

Mahalo nui loa for this opportunity to submit testimony. Please **PASS** SB2996.

**Aloha 'Āina Momona no nā kau ā kau.**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 12:53:21 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kekoa Alip	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

***I strongly support SB 2996***, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection consistent with the public trust and the needs of Hawai‘i’s residents, including Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners and the public at large.

Commercial aquarium fishing flies in the face of Hawai‘i’s constitutional public trust doctrine, which requires that our natural and cultural resources be used and conserved for the public good rather than private gain. But the aquarium collection industry has extracted and exported millions of specimens of public trust marine life—the vast majority of which die within a year after collection—for private (primarily out of state) profit.

At the same time, this commercial activity has diminished the ecological and cultural integrity of our reef systems, undermined the state’s food security and climate resilience, and degraded a cornerstone of our tourism-based economy. Not surprisingly, the majority of Hawai‘i residents, and Native Hawaiian subsistence communities in particular, support a ban on commercial aquarium collection.

While commercial aquarium collection has not been allowed for the better part of a decade, the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) has recently proposed rules that would reopen West Hawai‘i waters to commercial aquarium collection, claiming that they are mandated to do so under state law. Yet as DAR has recognized, agency rulemaking regulates how an activity operates, not whether the activity should be allowed. Accordingly, the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to decide whether this activity should be permitted at all.

Healthy coral reefs and ecosystems support food security, cultural and subsistence practices, and provide shoreline protection. In addition, on-reef tourism activities that depend on vibrant and healthy ecosystems generate approximately \$1.2 billion annually for the state.

Therefore, a statutory ban is critical to protect what is not only a major economic engine for the state, but a cornerstone of resilience and self-sufficiency for our present and future generations from ever-increasing extractive stressors placed on our marine environment.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Kekoa Alip

Kailua-Kona, HI

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 12:59:44 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Alisha Shanti Chauhan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I strongly support SB2996 that prohibits the collection of marine life for sale or export as aquarium pets.

Hawai'i's reefs are already under severe stress from climate change, warming seas, pollution, and habitat loss. Reef fish are not decorations — they are essential workers in the reef ecosystem. Herbivorous and grazing fish control algae, support coral recovery, and strengthen reef resilience. Removing them for commercial trade weakens the entire living system that protects our shorelines, food webs, and communities.

Protecting reef fish protects reefs. Protecting reefs protects Hawai'i's culture, food security, economy, and future. Please pass SB2996. Mahalo for your attention

Dear Senators,

I am a teacher who was born in Hawaii, and a 35 year public servant/teacher with the State of Hawaii, asking you to **please VOTE NO on SB2996** for the following reasons:

1. Students in the classroom & the public-via Waikiki Aquarium or Sea Life Park- deserve to see and learn about our tropical fish. **This bill takes away a valuable tool to teach caring, responsibility, biodiversity, respect for nature, ecosystems, ocean acidification, and global warming.**
2. SB2996 **ignores the scientific facts of DAR**-one of our nation's most strict managers of fisheries-and **defies the opinion letter of 21 oceanographers-several of whom are world renowned. that Hawaii's Aquarium fishery IS SUSTAINABLE.** The current rule-making process will make it even more so.
3. This bill **ignores legal decisions of the Hawaii Supreme Court, which mandated an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the fishery, the ramifications of which unjustly disrespects the rights of aquarium fisher's who have lost (5) to (8) years of income, and thousands of dollars invested in to reopen a SUSTAINABLE avocation.**
4. Vote NO because **the BLNR already voted 9-0 in favor of the Aquarium Rules package being passed.**
5. **Economic Reasons:** Several part-Hawaiians livelihoods' I know, and many suppliers who are supported by Hawaii's aquarium fishery will lose jobs & income permanently. **Isn't the state short of funds? Why kill an industry that bring in taxes to the state?**

Sincerely,

Mary Beth Tubbs, M.Ed.  
NEA Retired

SB2996 – Opposed

**LATE**

Aloha,

SB2996 is significantly flawed and needs to be rejected.

It states that the Aquarium trade has, “removed some herbivorous species by upwards of eighty per cent of their population in many areas.” This statement is totally false. Fish counts done by State Scientists have shown that there has been no depletion of any fish species by the Aquarium Trade. Fish numbers on our reefs are at normal levels and have been so for over 25 years of studies done by the state. Please base your decision on science, facts and truths and not lies and misinformation by the anti-aquarium activists.

Thanks You for your time.

Aloha,

Jim Lovell

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 1:10:05 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Malia Lightner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha chair our members of the committee,

My name is Malia Lightner and am a lifetime resident and kama'āina of the North Kona District on Hawaii island.

I am submitting this testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of Bill SB2996. This bill is essential for the protection of our nearshore ecosystems as it establishes a necessary statewide prohibition on the commercial collection of marine life for the aquarium trade. Our resources should be kept for the sustainability of our people and not commercial monetary gain.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for your continued commitment to protecting Hawai'i's valuable and irreplaceable marine life resources for generations to come.



*He Lawai'a no ke kai papa'u, he pōkole ke aho; He Lawai'a no ke kai hohonu  
he loa ke aho" "A fisherman of shallow seas uses a short line; a fisherman  
of the deep sea uses a long line."*

**KALANIHALE**

**LATE**

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

**RE: Strong Support for SB2996 (Relating to Environmental Protection) — Prohibiting Commercial Aquarium Collection**

On behalf of Kalanihale, I write in strong support of SB 2996, which establishes a statewide statutory prohibition on the commercial collection of marine life for sale and export as aquarium pets, while explicitly preserving scientific research, education, and aquaculture/captive breeding.

This bill resolves a fundamental policy question that agency rulemaking cannot: whether nearshore reef species should be treated as export commodities or protected as public trust resources for Hawai'i's people—especially for Native Hawaiian and local subsistence communities whose customary and traditional practices depend on healthy nearshore ecosystems.

Commercial aquarium collection has fueled decades of conflict by extracting culturally and ecologically significant species, including reef herbivores, from our nearshore waters for private profit—primarily for off-island consumers. This has impaired reef integrity and disrupted subsistence fishing practices, while treating public trust marine resources as ornaments rather than living resources central to food security, culture, and community resilience.

SB2996 is also critical for good governance. It would prevent the Division of Aquatic Resources from asserting that state law compels reopening commercial aquarium collection and would eliminate the need to spend scarce public resources on a costly permitting system designed to support an industry with negligible benefits to the state and its residents. Instead, DAR's limited capacity can be directed toward what communities across the pae 'āina are calling for: co-management support, reef stewardship, and addressing urgent, escalating threats to nearshore ecosystems.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than \$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai'i's marine resources for future generations.

For these reasons, Kalanihale respectfully urges the committees to pass SB2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Ka'imi Kaupiko   
Executive Director, Kalanihale

Miloli'i, Hawai'i Island

808.937.1310, [kkaupiko@gmail.com](mailto:kkaupiko@gmail.com) [www.kalanihale.org](http://www.kalanihale.org)

89-1831 Milolii Road  
Captain Cook, HI 96704

Phone: (808)937-1310  
Fax: (866)265-6376

[kalanihale@gmail.com](mailto:kalanihale@gmail.com)  
[www.kalanihale.com](http://www.kalanihale.com)

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 1:16:00 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Linsay Preston	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Protect Hawaii ecosystem and ban aquariums from harvesting fish and wildlife from Hawaii waters. Mahalo!

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 1:41:33 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kauiki Lind	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Hawai'i State Legislature

2/9/26 1:32:48 PM

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs:

**I strongly support** SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection consistent with the public trust and the needs of Hawai'i's residents, including Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners and the public at large.

Commercial aquarium fishing flies in the face of Hawai'i's constitutional public trust doctrine, which requires that our natural and cultural resources be used and conserved for the public good rather than private gain. But the aquarium collection industry has extracted and exported millions of specimens of public trust marine life—the vast majority of which die within a year after collection—for private (primarily out of state) profit.

At the same time, this commercial activity has diminished the ecological and cultural integrity of our reef systems, undermined the state's food security and climate resilience, and degraded a cornerstone of our tourism-based economy. Not surprisingly, the majority of Hawai'i residents, and Native Hawaiian subsistence communities in particular, support a ban on commercial aquarium collection.

While commercial aquarium collection has not been allowed for the better part of a decade, the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) has recently proposed rules that would reopen West Hawai'i waters to commercial aquarium collection, claiming that they are mandated to do so under state law. Yet as DAR has recognized, agency rulemaking regulates how an activity operates, not whether the activity should be allowed. Accordingly, the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to decide whether this activity should be permitted at all.

Healthy coral reefs and ecosystems support food security, cultural and subsistence practices, and provide shoreline protection. In addition, on-reef tourism activities that depend on vibrant and healthy ecosystems generate approximately \$1.2 billion annually for the state.

Therefore, a statutory ban is critical to protect what is not only a major economic engine for the state, but a cornerstone of resilience and self-sufficiency for our present and future generations from ever-increasing extractive stressors placed on our marine environment.

Per chapter 6.04 of the the Maui County Code for example, it explicitly states that,

“Causing injury, including: piercing  
or deflating a fish's swim bladder; fin or  
spine trimming; exposing to air; exposing to  
temperature fluctuations of more than a two  
degree difference from the water they were  
collected in; carrying, or causing to be  
carried, in or upon any vehicle or other  
conveyance, in a manner resulting in injury to  
the aquatic life; and  
c. Causing the death of aquatic life.

3. Document the mortality rates and disposal  
methods of all aquatic life collected.”

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to **pass SB 2996**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Ka’uiki Lind, Kipahulu, Hana, Maui

Crichton@hawaii.edu



**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 2:25:30 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sylvia Dahlby	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**OPPOSED to SB2996 2/9/26**

**Aloha,**

**I respectfully urge you to VOTE NO on SB2996.**

**The BLNR already voted 9-0 in favor of the Aquarium Rules package being passed, let's go with that before deciding to shut down the entire aquarium fishing industry.**

**SB2996 ignores legal decisions of the Hawaii Supreme Court, which mandated an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the aquarium fishery. The subsequent delay unfairly disrespects the rights of aquarium fishers who have lost more than 5 years of income during the process.**

**SB2996 is another attempt to impose environmental extremist OPINIONS into law and crush local small businesses. This Bill ignores the scientific FACTS of DAR, the EIS, many studies by professional oceanographers, and regulatory compliance assessments which have all proven that Hawaii's Aquarium fishery is a sustainable industry.**

**I am a long-time kama'aina resident who finds there's too much legislation that favors big businesses and the tourist industry over small business and local folks trying to make a living.**

**SB2996 is a perfect example of how small businesses get the blame for larger environmental issues that affect our reefs, promote a healthy ecosystem, and address sustainability challenges.**

**There is zero scientific evidence that SB2996 will make a significant environmental impact on an already highly regulated industry in one of the most strictly managed fisheries on earth.**

**All this Bill does is kill a few locally-owned small businesses. Please VOTE NO.**

**Mahalo,**

**Sylvia Dahlby**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 4:21:25 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pamela Small	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 2026

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2996

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Pamela Small, and I am a resident of Kawaihae on Hawaii Island. I am writing today to express my heartfelt support for SB2996 which proposes to ban all commercial aquarium collection within the state of Hawaii. We have been in a yo-yo situation concerning commercial aquarium collection for over a decade and it is time to put a stop to the exploitation of our precious coral reefs and aquatic life for good.

As a scuba diver and boater, I have been watching the quality of Hawaii's coral reefs deteriorate since I was young. The number of reef fish has been horribly depleted by and for the profit of a few local collectors and aquarium keepers on the mainland. There are entire dive sites and portions of the coast that riddled with algae that the herbivore fish would have eaten if they were still in the ocean in large numbers. Yellow Tang, once a prolific herbivore in Hawaii waters, are so depleted that I sometimes only see two or three on a dive when I used to swim among a beautiful sea of yellow.

With ongoing climate change causing stronger storms, algae blooms, and rising ocean temperatures, the health of the sea has never been more important. A healthy ocean equals a healthier planet. All species in the sea work symbiotically. Remove or deplete one key species and the entire ecosystem suffers or collapses.

The ocean is Hawaii's most precious resource. Surfing, canoeing, paddle boarding, diving, snorkeling, boating, and fishing are cornerstones of Hawaiian life and culture. The state has a public trust obligation to protect natural resources for present and future generations. This is your opportunity to honor that obligation by supporting and passing SB2996.

Additionally, I would like to suggest that Hawaii not only ban commercial aquarium collection, but it is of the utmost importance to implement rigorous enforcement, monthly reef fish monitoring, and severe penalties for poachers (including significant fines, jail time for repeat offenders, and boat seizure).

You, as the county council, have the power to have an influence on the health and survival of Hawaii's reef fish and the overall health of the ocean. I beg you to please do the right thing and pass SB2996.

Mahalo,

Pamela Small

Kawaihae, HI

**LATE**

Aloha Chair Richards, Chair Lee, and members of WLA/HWN,

I am the Hsiao Endowed Professor of Marine Biology at UH Mānoa, testifying today as a private citizen. I have studied Hawaiian coral reefs and followed aquarium collecting issues since the 1970s. I have seldom testified on bills affecting the Hawai'i aquarium fishery because I have very mixed thoughts regarding this highly contested controversy. I am hopeful that my following long-term observations may help your deliberations regarding SB2996.

On one hand, I know many highly respected scientific colleagues who worked long and hard to establish a sustainable aquarium fishery in West Hawai'i Island without negatively affecting that coral reef ecosystem. I believe they were successful. Indeed, during the first decade or so of this millennium, management of the West Hawai'i aquarium fishery was touted as a highly effective ecosystem-based approach employing a network of marine protected areas (technically, Fishery Replenishment Areas). Importantly, this approach mimicked traditional marine conservation methods, including a strong community-based process (Tissot et al. 2004).

On the other hand, coral bleaching events over the past decade killed many corals along the West Hawai'i coast, exacerbated by severe pollution from leaching sewage in some regions, which stimulates growth of seaweeds that smother corals. A recent study documented the importance of abundant herbivorous fishes in the survival of West Hawai'i coral reefs, given that these fishes remove seaweeds (Gove et al. 2023). Unfortunately, two herbivorous fishes are the primary target of the aquarium fishery, accounting for about 90% of the catch: yellow tang (*Zebrasoma flavescens*, lau'ipala) and goldring surgeonfish (*Ctenochaetus strigosus*, kole). I am also fully aware and sympathetic to those who believe it is not pono to remove living native reef fishes from Hawai'i.

I wish you the very best in deciding the best course of action on SB2996, especially given the misinformation that has been conveyed by both sides of this controversy.

Mahalo,  
Mark Hixon

Gove, J. M., G. J. Williams, J. Lecky, E. Brown, E. Conklin, C. Counsell, G. Davis, M. K. Donovan, K. Falinski, and L. Kramer. 2023. Coral reefs benefit from reduced land–sea impacts under ocean warming. *Nature* 621:536-542.

Tissot, B. N., W. J. Walsh, and L. E. Hallacher. 2004. Evaluating effectiveness of a marine protected area network in West Hawaii to increase productivity of an aquarium fishery. *Pacific Science* 58:175-188.

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 5:20:00 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Thomas Brandt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support.

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:19:02 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ocean Ramsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Coral reefs are the foundation of Hawai‘i’s food security, culture, economy, and marine biodiversity, and their collapse would be irreversible for both people and ecosystems. Scientific evidence shows that herbivorous reef fish are essential to coral resilience under climate stress, yet the commercial aquarium trade has removed millions of these fish, driving severe population declines and disrupting reef function. Even after collection pressure was reduced, key species like the yellow tang have failed to recover as expected, signaling deeper ecological damage and diminished reef health. The economic return of the aquarium trade does not justify the long-term environmental costs, enforcement burden, or loss of public trust resources protected under the Hawai‘i State Constitution. This measure is a necessary, science-based step to safeguard Hawai‘i’s reefs for future generations while preserving traditional practices, food fisheries, and sustainable aquaculture alternatives.

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:24:27 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Juan Oliphant	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support

Aloha Chair and Members,

My name is Juan Oliphant, and I am a resident of Hawai‘i. I strongly support this bill to prohibit the commercial collection of fish for the aquarium trade.

The methods used to harvest aquarium fish cause unnecessary stress, injury, and high mortality, while repeatedly removing key species from already stressed reef ecosystems. This practice disrupts natural balance, weakens reef health, and undermines conservation efforts at a time when Hawai‘i’s reefs are facing climate change, pollution, and overuse.

Our marine life is a public trust resource and should not be exploited for private commercial gain. Reef fish are far more valuable alive in the ocean than removed for the aquarium trade.

I respectfully urge you to pass this bill and protect Hawai‘i’s reefs for future generations.

Mahalo,

Juan Oliphant



**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 7:44:03 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kelcy Durbin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of SB2996, a crucial measure that prohibits the harvesting of aquatic life for commercial aquarium purposes in Hawaii, regardless of the method of collection. This legislation is a necessary step toward protecting our fragile marine ecosystems, which have long suffered from unsustainable extraction practices that threaten the health, diversity, and resilience of native aquatic populations.

By enacting SB2996, Hawaii will demonstrate its commitment to responsible policy-making and stewardship of its unique natural resources. This bill will help preserve vital marine habitats for future generations, support the recovery of species at risk, and foster a more sustainable relationship between our communities and the ocean. Passing SB2996 will set a positive example for other states and jurisdictions, showing that economic interests can be balanced with the imperative to protect our environment and ensure the long-term well-being of both people and wildlife.

I urge the committee to support SB2996 and take this important step forward for Hawaii's marine life and the broader global effort to safeguard our planet's biodiversity.

Thank you,

Kelcy Durbin

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 10:23:37 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Renee Dacanay	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm in full support of SB2996

This bill protects our reefs, Native Hawaiian cultural practices, and Hawai'i's marine ecosystems from commercial aquarium exploitation.

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/9/2026 9:25:10 PM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kimeona Kane	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Kimeona Kane of Waimānalo in strong support of this item. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Ke Aloha Nui

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 12:28:27 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dandré Richards	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Sen. Herbert M. Richards III, Chair

Committee on Hawaiian Affairs

Sen. Chris Lee, Chair

Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts

Bill SB 2996

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

1:00 pm, Conference Room 224, State Capitol, 415 Beretania Street

IN SUPPORT

Hi, I'm Dandre Richards, a Chinatown resident. I am testifying in support of SB 2996.

As cited in the bill the calculated value of Hawaii's coral reef ecosystems is over \$33 bn. It is worth keeping intact.

Commercial fishing ventures not only take away from the Hawaiian ecosystem but also invite invasive species which may lead to further degradation.

All species native to the waters that surround and flow through Hawai'i are at danger when unrestricted fishing is allowed. The coral reefs are a visual indicator of the damage such practices can cause.

Please move forward with SB 2996.

Thank You,

Dandre Richards

808 462 0099



**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 4:37:38 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Betsy Cramer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members,

As a resident of Hawaii, I write in **strong support of SB2996**, which would enact a permanent statewide ban on commercial aquarium collecting for the pet trade.

Hawai‘i’s coral reefs are living ecosystems essential to biodiversity, food security, cultural practices, and our local economy. Reef fish are not decorative commodities — they play critical ecological roles that keep reefs healthy, resilient, and capable of recovering from climate stress, coral bleaching, and pollution. Removing them for the aquarium trade undermines the balance of these ecosystems and threatens the long-term survival of our reefs.

Recent scientific analysis of the State’s own data shows that even after the 2017 shutdown of aquarium collecting, key species like yellow tang failed to recover as biologically expected. This is deeply concerning and demonstrates that decades of extraction caused lasting damage. At the same time, the State has drastically reduced reef monitoring, leaving Hawai‘i effectively blind to the true condition of fish populations already depleted by overcollection. Expanding or reviving commercial extraction under these conditions is irresponsible and dangerous.

The aquarium trade also conflicts with Native Hawaiian values and pono fishing practices, which limit take to what is truly needed and prioritize stewardship over profit. Commercial aquarium collecting violates the principle of mālama ‘āina and the State’s constitutional public trust duty to protect natural resources for present and future generations.

Additionally, residents receive no meaningful public benefit from this industry, while bearing the environmental damage, enforcement costs, and cultural loss. Ongoing illegal poaching and repeated criminal convictions further show that the trade cannot be sustainably or ethically managed.

Hawai‘i has a choice: continue sacrificing reef ecosystems for private profit, or act decisively to protect biodiversity, cultural values, and the health of our ocean for future generations. SB2996 is a necessary and overdue step toward true reef protection.

I respectfully urge you to **pass SB2996 out of committee** and stand with communities across Hawai‘i who have long called for a permanent end to commercial aquarium collecting.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your commitment to protecting Hawai'i's reefs.

Betsy Cramer

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February 10, 2026

**LATE**

Aloha Chair and Committee Members:

I, Cheyenne Paris 'Makanui' Kitahara respectfully submit this testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT of SB2996**. As a Hawaiian, a mother, a cultural practitioner, an eleventh generation grand-daughter of Kekahawai'olenākona, kia'i wai and fifth generation kia'i loko, I strongly oppose the collection of i'a (fish) from Hawaiian waters for **any and all ornamental and aquarium commercial purposes**. Our i'a (marine life) are vital to our native ecosystems and any sort of collection of i'a as pets, for public exhibition, for public display, or for sale in aquariums, amusement, or decoration is HEWA. **I STRONGLY SUPPORT SB2996**.

I humbly urge legislation to **prohibit the commercial aquarium harvest of aquatic life from our state marine waters** to ensure the current and future protection of Native Hawaiian traditional and customary rights, our cultural resources and sustenance of future generations. Our herbivores are vital to our reefs, the removal of these species will only further impair our ecosystem and food security. **I STRONGLY SUPPORT SB2996**.

My family and I have practiced our culture through fishing and diving for sustenance as our ancestors have our entire lives. Twenty five years ago there were so many fish; I can remember in the 10-20ft depth, there was once an abundance of fish like the Kole, tons of Paku'iku'i and in my lifetime alone have seen significant drops in fish count. In addition to this I continue to witness more and more people without kuleana or pili (connection) to these lands taking, collecting, desecrating usually for \$\$\$\$. We depend on our oceans to provide sustenance to our families, and strongly oppose the collection of our i'a, our nourishment for commercial benefit and profit. **I STRONGLY SUPPORT SB2996**.

Our way of life, our marine life, our oceans, and our people are not commodities and have constantly suffered compounding issues which need to cease. Protect our i'a - marine life, protect our wai - water, and protect our Hawaiians - people. **I STRONGLY SUPPORT SB2996**.

In conclusion, I ask the Hawaii State Legislature to please do the following:

1. **Prioritize Native Hawaiian traditional and customary rights, needs and concerns regarding subsistence over commercial extraction.**
2. Remember that the Hawaii's Public Trust Doctrine, is the legal principle protected in the State of Hawaii's constitution we have a responsibility to hold ALL public natural resources in trust for the benefit of the people of Hawaii, present and future. **Public trust resources are NOT for privatized commercial export.**
3. **PROHIBIT** the harvest and collection of aquatic life from Hawaii waters for ornamental commercial aquarium purposes.

**I STRONGLY SUPPORT SB2996.**

Mahalo,

Cheyenne Paris 'Makanui' Kitahara / Kekahawaiolenakona

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:02:35 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jean Jewell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

**I strongly support SB 2996**, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

Hawai'i's Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than **\$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue** and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai'i's marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to **pass SB 2996**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Jean Jewell

Holualoa, Hawaii Island

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:14:29 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

**LATE**

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Theodora Furtado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection consistent with the public trust and the needs of Hawai‘i’s residents, including Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners and the public at large.

Commercial aquarium fishing flies in the face of Hawai‘i’s constitutional public trust doctrine, which requires that our natural and cultural resources be used and conserved for the public good rather than private gain. But the aquarium collection industry has extracted and exported millions of specimens of public trust marine life—the vast majority of which die within a year after collection—for private (primarily out of state) profit.

At the same time, this commercial activity has diminished the ecological and cultural integrity of our reef systems, undermined the state’s food security and climate resilience, and degraded a cornerstone of our tourism-based economy. Not surprisingly, the majority of Hawai‘i residents, and Native Hawaiian subsistence communities in particular, support a ban on commercial aquarium collection.

While commercial aquarium collection has not been allowed for the better part of a decade, the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) has recently proposed rules that would reopen West Hawai‘i waters to commercial aquarium collection, claiming that they are mandated to do so under state law. Yet as DAR has recognized, agency rulemaking regulates how an activity operates, not whether the activity should be allowed. Accordingly, the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to decide whether this activity should be permitted at all.

Healthy coral reefs and ecosystems support food security, cultural and subsistence practices, and provide shoreline protection. In addition, on-reef tourism activities that depend on vibrant and healthy ecosystems generate approximately \$1.2 billion annually for the state.

Therefore, a statutory ban is critical to protect what is not only a major economic engine for the state, but a cornerstone of resilience and self-sufficiency for our present and future generations from ever-increasing extractive stressors placed on our marine environment.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to pass SB 2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Theodora Furtado

Honolulu, Oahu

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:23:23 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelli Soileau	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

I strongly support SB 2996, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than **\$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue** and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to **pass SB 2996**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Kelli Soileau

Kāne‘ohe, O‘ahu



**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:59:11 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Cates	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong opposition to SB2996, which proposes to permanently prohibit commercial aquarium fishing in Hawai'i.

While protection of marine resources is a shared priority, SB2996 is not supported by the best available science, does not reflect existing regulatory authority, and would eliminate a highly managed, demonstrably sustainable fishery without evidence of resource depletion attributable to aquarium collection.

**1. The Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) Has Repeatedly Testified the Fishery Is Sustainable**

DAR has provided sworn testimony and published scientific analyses concluding that the commercial aquarium fishery is sustainable. In their most recent submittal to the Small Business Review Board in October 2025, DAR scientists and fisheries management stated all data supports re-opening of the aquarium fishery (under their rules package proposal for a new aquarium regulatory framework), and according to their extensive assessments of the fishery, the risk of the aquarium fishery causing widespread population decline is *low*.

DAR's findings are grounded in:

- Long-term fishery-dependent catch data.
- Fishery-independent underwater visual census (UVC) surveys.
- Comparative biomass and density analyses inside and outside closed areas.
- Species-specific life history assessments.
- Area-based management performance monitoring.

In West Hawai'i, where the most comprehensive marine management framework has been implemented, studies have documented:

- Stable or increasing biomass of key aquarium-targeted species in open areas.
- Significantly higher biomass in Fish Replenishment Areas (FRAs).
- No evidence of fishery-driven collapse of reef fish populations under managed conditions.

These findings are based in part on monitoring by the NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center and long-running DAR survey programs. The data consistently demonstrate that aquarium collection **does not** produce resource-level depletion.

## **2. The Fishery Is Already One of the Most Regulated Reef Fisheries in the State**

Commercial aquarium collection operates under:

- Hawai‘i Environmental Policy Act (HEPA) requirements and compliance
- Commercial Marine License (CML) requirements.
- Reporting and catch documentation.
- Gear restrictions (e.g., fine mesh nets only).
- Area-based closures.
- Species restrictions (including “White List” of species allowed for collection).
- Permit caps (issuance of a limited number of aquarium fishery permits based on terms and conditions determined by DLNR).

By contrast, the most impactful use of marine resources, including recreational reef fishing activities, are not subject to similar levels of documentation. The aquarium fishery is the only fishery subject to HEPA compliance prior to permit issuance in the State. Additionally, based upon DAR’s scientific assessment, there is little justification for keeping the fishery closed based on potential ecosystem impacts.

SB2996 would eliminate the highest monitored fishery in the State while leaving broader reef extraction activities unaffected. Most importantly, a permanent ban on the aquarium fishery will open the door to the closure of other fisheries in the future.

## **3. DLNR Already Has Broad Statutory Authority for Adaptive Management**

The Legislature has granted DLNR extensive authority to manage fisheries using adaptive management tools. These include:

- Area closures.
- Seasonal closures.
- Species-specific bag limits.
- Moratoria.
- Gear restrictions.
- Permit limitations.
- Catch quotas and annual catch limits

If scientific data indicated localized depletion or emerging risk due to unforeseen circumstances or sudden environmental changes, DLNR already has the authority to respond rapidly and surgically—without imposing a permanent, statewide prohibition. DLNR can implement immediate administrative actions pursuant to Act 49 (Session Laws of Hawai‘i 2021), or through supplemental environmental review under HEPA.

A permanent statutory ban removes this flexibility and overrides the very regulatory tools the Legislature has already empowered DLNR to use.

#### **4. A Ban Is a Policy Decision, Not a Science-Based Necessity**

SB2996 does not arise from documented fishery collapse, peer-reviewed findings of unsustainable harvest rates, or demonstrated ecosystem-level decline attributable to aquarium collection.

Instead, the scientific record—including DAR testimony and long-term monitoring data—indicates that regulated aquarium fisheries can operate sustainably. DAR found that the amount of management and oversight on the commercial aquarium fishery surpasses any other fishery in the State.

Where environmental concerns exist, the appropriate response is through DLNR management authority, not elimination of an entire sector.

#### **5. Economic and Community Impacts**

The aquarium fishery supports small, locally owned businesses and has historically consisted almost entirely of family-run operations. The temporary closure of the fishery since 2017, has had disproportionate effects on owner-operators who have generationally participated in the fishery. These small businesses do not have the ability to shift product lines or relocate operations.

In many cases, the closure has resulted in a permanent exit from the industry, loss of livelihoods, and erosion of specialized local expertise developed over decades. Most of the Native Hawaiian aquarium fishers come from multi-generational fishing families, with knowledge, practices, and reef stewardship traditions passed down through successive generations. These aquarium fishers are born and raised in fishing communities, including the Westside and Windward O‘ahu.

A statutory ban would permanently eliminate their livelihoods absent any documented environmental or ecological necessity.

SB2996 is unnecessary from a fisheries management standpoint. The scientific record does not demonstrate that the regulated aquarium fishery is unsustainable and DLNR already possesses robust adaptive management authority to address any emerging issues.

Sound public policy should be guided by data, proportional regulation, and adaptive management—not permanent prohibitions in the absence of demonstrated resource failure.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to defer or reject SB2996.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 10:33:26 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kencho Gurung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support

**LATE**

**SB-2996**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 11:01:34 AM

Testimony for WLA on 2/10/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rosanna ?Anolani Alegado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e Chairs Lee and Richards, Vice Chairs Inouye and Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committees on Water, Land, and Culture and the Arts and Hawaiian Affairs,

**I strongly support SB 2996**, which establishes a statewide prohibition on commercial aquarium collection.

This bill would finally resolve a long-standing conflict that the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources has failed to address. Commercial aquarium collection raises a threshold policy question: whether reef species held in trust for Hawai‘i’s people should be extracted for profit and sold as ornamental commodities, primarily for off-island consumers. Only the Legislature has the authority—and responsibility—to make that determination.

Hawai‘i’s Constitution requires the state to conserve natural resources, protect environmental rights, and safeguard Native Hawaiian customary and traditional practices. These constitutional obligations are incompatible with the continued commercial extraction of reef species for aquarium resale.

Healthy coral reefs generate more than **\$1.2 billion annually in tourism revenue** and provide critical ecosystem services, including shoreline protection and food security. A statutory ban on commercial aquarium collection protects this economic engine and foundation of resilience and preserves Hawai‘i’s marine resources for future generations.

A clear prohibition also provides legal certainty, simplifies enforcement, and affirms that nearshore reefs are public trust resources deserving the highest level of protection. Because the

commercial aquarium industry has not operated for the past five years due to litigation, now is the appropriate time to resolve this issue without economic disruption.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committees to **pass SB 2996**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Rosanna 'Anolani Alegado

Kahalu'u O'ahu